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## **FEATURED ARTICLE**

**Chinese Strategic Culture**

## **TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE**

**US Pivot to Asia  
The Middle East**

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**Dean of Faculty**  
**Brig. Gen. Andrew P. Armacost**

**Department Head**  
**Col. Thomas A. Drohan**

**Editor**  
**Dr. Brent J. Talbot**

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## From The Editor

Our feature article authored by 2 Lt Bill Song takes an in-depth look at Chinese strategic culture and implications for US policy in the region. With the current Administration's strategic refocus of foreign and security policy towards Asia, the so called "Pivot to Asia," US-China relations will be central to the overall success of the 'pivot.' We follow up with a further Cold War review of China by 2 Lts Ibarra and O'Kelley, and 2 Lt David Beeson's study arguing against increased missile defenses in the Pacific region.

However, with the great deal of American blood and treasure that has been spent in the Middle East during the past two decades, we also thought it wise to include Mideast policy concerns/lessons in this issue as a contrast and reminder that we might not be too quick to abandon this still-dangerous region. 2 Lt Ryne Hanson looks at the Khobar Towers attack and resulting influence on US casualty aversion; and Cadet scholar and Humanities major Daniel Bieber analyzes Turkey's civil-military relations as well as its effort to find its place in the world, whether it belongs to the Middle East or Europe.

This issue closes with a book review of Robert Pape's *Dying to Win*, a study of the strategy behind suicide terrorism which has been a prime tool of adversaries who have worked to drive the US out of the Middle East.

ASJs mission is to feature topical and regionally-focused articles of interest to the military academic community. Both military and civilian academic faculty and staff are encouraged to submit articles for publication and nominate outstanding cadet papers. We also encourage reviews of military-relevant topics. Send all submissions in word (.doc or .docx) format with Chicago-style footnotes to ASJeditor@usafa.edu

On the cover: A traditional dragon celebration of the Chinese New Year, courtesy of [livelingua.com](http://livelingua.com)

# Table of Contents



---

## Featured Article

**1 Chinese Strategic Culture: US Policy Implications**  
*BILL SONG*

---

## Topical Focus: Pivot to Asia

**11 China During the Cold War: A Billion People on a Lonely Island**  
*MATTHEW IBARRA AND MICHAEL O'KELLEY*

**20 Feeding Paper Tigers: Unintended Consequences of American Missile Defense in the Pacific**  
*DAVID BEESON*

---

## Topical Focus: The Middle East

**27 Lessons from the Khobar Towers: A Case Study in American Casualty Aversion**  
*RYNE HANSON*

**36 Turkey's Civil-Military Dilemma and EU Ascension**  
*DANIEL BIEBER*

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## Book Review

**41 *Dying to Win* BY ROBERT PAPE**  
*REVIEWED BY VIKTOR THEISS*

# Chinese Strategic Culture

## US Policy Implications

BILL S. SONG

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*January 2007, the Chinese military use a ground-based missile to hit and destroy one of its aging satellites orbiting more than 500 miles in space.<sup>1</sup> October 2010, a Chinese supercomputer surpasses the US's supercomputer to become the fastest computer in the world.<sup>2</sup> December 2010, China's military deploys a new anti-ship ballistic missile dubbed the "carrier-killer" that is reportedly able to sink aircraft carriers over 2000 kilometers away.<sup>3</sup> January 2011, China's stealth fighter prototype makes its first test flight.<sup>4</sup>*

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For the past couple of years, reports of Chinese military and technological developments have littered US newspapers. These reports, in addition to China's remarkable economic gains within the past decade, have made many Americans, especially those in Washington, nervous. This nervous attitude towards China's advances in military technology has manifested into the so called "China Threat" theory which posits that China may threaten US dominance as the world's superpower.<sup>5</sup> However, before taking any dramatic action, US national security policymakers must have a contextual understanding of what shapes Chinese strategic culture – the thoughts, motivations, and historical experiences that dictate Chinese political, economic, and military imperatives. A deeper look into Chinese strategic culture may help explain the motives for China's surge in weapons development. Ultimately, this paper will analyze how an understanding of Chinese strategic culture may help

inform US policy towards China and strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

### The China Threat

Much of China's military technology advances can be attributed to its double-digit economic gains. For the past thirty years, China's economy experienced an average annual growth rate of ten percent.<sup>6</sup> This explosive and relatively sustained growth rate catapulted China ahead of Japan as the second largest economy in the world in August of 2010.<sup>7</sup> The economic growth allowed China to budget more funds into defense spending, particularly military research and development. In 2000, China's defense spending grew by 12.7 percent, and in 2007, China's defense budget was \$122 billion, which, when compared to the US, was within orders of magnitude.<sup>8</sup> The result of this spending spree has been new weapons systems on a scale that the world has not seen since the years of the Cold War.

Alarming, all of the new additions – submarines and capital ships; hundreds of new frontline fighters and bombers; and the thousands of cruise and ballistic missiles added to the arsenal – have come in the face of no new imminent threat to China.

What, then, can be said to be the cause of China's interest in advanced military technology and a modern military? Although most would be quick to assume that China is building its military forces to pursue some dark agenda, some see China's behavior as a symptom of fear. Yet as the second wealthiest country faced with no immediate or imminent threats, what does China have to fear? According to Robert Kagan, what the Chinese fear is what all rising power fear: that they will be denied.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese economic system has thrived and continues to flourish in a global economic

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Second Lieutenant BILL S. SONG is a Class of 2012 Scholar and Aeronautical Engineering major

system created and led, for the most part, by the United States. Chinese leaders still remember what happened in 1989, when the international liberal community, led by the United States, imposed economic sanctions and isolated China diplomatically. The resulting internal strife quickly taught Chinese leaders that economic prosperity was a prerequisite for the political stability of their autocratic, one-party government. As long as goods and wealth flow abundantly in the country, government leaders can justify their claim that one-party rule is “in the best interest of the Chinese people.”<sup>10</sup>

This rapid economic growth and military modernization effort, together with increasingly strong and assertive attitudes in world relations has aroused fears about a “China Threat” and motivated debates about possible strategies for “containing” China in the future.<sup>11</sup> In response to China’s defense spending spree, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressed his concerns during a speech to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2009:

China is modernizing across the whole of its armed forces. The areas of greatest concern are Chinese investments and growing capabilities in cyber- and anti-satellite warfare, anti-air and anti-ship weaponry, submarines, and ballistic missiles. Modernization in these areas could threaten America’s primary means of projecting power and helping allies in the Pacific.<sup>12</sup>

Bill Gertz from the Washington Times went so far as to write that “the People’s Republic of China is the most serious national security

threat the United States faces at present and will remain so into the foreseeable future.”<sup>13</sup> Although the official policy of the United States has been one of cooperation and engagement with China, privately, most American officials acknowledge an element of “hedging” or “containment” in the policy.

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*On the other side of the spectrum are those that believe China is an exception to power politics ‘...China will transcend ideological differences to strive for peace, development, and cooperation with all countries of the world.’*

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On the other side of the spectrum are those that believe China is an exception to power politics. Chinese scholar, Zheng Bijian famously wrote that China will “transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge, as well as the Cold War mentality that defined international relations along ideological lines. Instead, China will transcend ideological differences to strive for peace, development, and cooperation with all countries of the world.”<sup>14</sup> The Chinese leadership has tried to embody this sentiment in hopes of calming the growing international concerns about their increased economic, political, and military strength. China has established numerous “Confucius Institutes” around the world that promote Chinese culture and language. Indeed, the Chinese have taken notes from World War II and the Cold War and understand that assertive power politics may result in a fate similar to that of Germany, Japan,

and the Soviet Union. Economically, China has pursued options that encourage economic partnership and interdependence by deepening economic ties with other Asian countries, proposing Asian free-trade zones, and even accepting disadvantageous trade agreements in the interest of trade.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, China has played a major role in strengthening multilateral ties among the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries as well as building new institutions like the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization). Although China has done much to increase relations among Asian countries, critics claim that these economic ventures provide a convenient avenue for China to exert its own influence and interests.

Although, in general, the US would be concerned about any rising power due to the fact that history suggests rapidly rising powers often bring uncertainty, instability, and competition with them as they begin to assert themselves on the international scene, China is cause for more concern. Robert Kagan points out, “as ambitious as the United States was at the turn of the 20th century, Great Britain, the then-preeminent global power, could tolerate America’s rambunctious and assertive policies in this hemisphere and elsewhere more easily because the two countries had more in common politically and culturally than not.”<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the US and China. The fact that American strategists and policymakers did not worry about Japan’s economic rise to power, and today, do not cringe at night thinking about



the potential dangers posed by a rising India, confirms that it is the nature of the country's culture that is important.

The struggle between China and the United States that will dominate the 21st century is about both power and beliefs. Representing the world's strongest autocracy and the world's strongest democracy, respectively, both powers are contesting for leadership in East Asia and both believe it necessary to promote their interests and beliefs. This contest is also as much about ideas and legitimacy as it is about power. In the liberal view of the United States, since China is not a democracy, it is by nature illegitimate and therefore cannot be trusted. History has conditioned the United States to classify autocratic governments as unstable and insecure; governments that rely on force to keep themselves in power and to deal with the world.

The clash of ideologies is a serious cause for concern for Chinese leaders. China, one of the few remaining autocratic states in the world, is becoming increasingly surrounded by democratic states while the American liberal hegemony continues to grow in East Asia. Furthermore, China's ideological identity remains somewhat undefined. China is certainly not a democracy, yet it has progressed from its communist roots. China maintains an autocratic, one-party political system yet boasts one of the most productive capitalist-based economic systems. This economic system has produced a middle class the size of the total American population. Despite its seemingly contradictory political and economic system, the Chinese do have an ideology and

have developed a foreign policy to protect it.

The United States should also be concerned about this Chinese ideology. To many Americans, the fact that the end of the Cold War left the United States as the sole superpower was proof of the superiority of American democracy and liberalism. This attitude developed into what is now known as the "Washington Consensus". Many countries, some reluctantly, subscribed to this belief and therefore chose to build their governments based on the American system. However, the decline of US legitimacy and the emergence of new rising powers have led to a decline in global receptivity to the notion of the "Washington Consensus".<sup>17</sup> These rising powers, China in particular, have made their rise on an ideology that presents an attractive alternative to the American system.

Exploring and attempting to define this Chinese ideology will therefore help understand what informs Chinese foreign policy. An insight into China's history, motivations, and goals may enlighten the cultural dimensions of China's strategic culture and explain the motives for expanding its military capability.

## Chinese Strategic Culture

The role of culture in international relations has recently become a scholarly issue in mainstream scholarship in the post-Cold War era. Jeffrey Lantis, a well-known scholar of strategic culture posits that "culture can affect significantly grand strategy and state behavior".<sup>18</sup> In this discussion, culture can be taken as meaning "the fundamental factor for defining and understanding the human condition". This definition is important because it focuses the



analysis on how culture affects how people think and act. The discussion that follows will consider how traditional Chinese culture, historical experiences, and nationalism have shaped Chinese strategic culture to what it is today.

of ‘unity between man and nature’, which pursues overall harmony between man and nature and harmony among men.”<sup>21</sup> Huiyun Feng goes further by arguing that this philosophical idea Jijun described can be extended to

consisting of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States invaded China in order to protect their trade interests from the Boxer Uprising of 1900.<sup>23</sup> Afterwards, much of China was carved up and divided amongst the Western powers as colonies. Essentially, the imperial Chinese government lost effective control of almost a third of its country.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the losses sustained by the Chinese imperial government, thousands of Chinese people died and even more suffered from mass raping, looting, robbery, arson, and murder during the Eight Nation Alliance’s campaign.<sup>25</sup> Of all the foreign powers, Japan inflicted the most death and suffering on the Chinese people. Even in the midst of the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, China once again was at the mercy of a foreign power. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria. This invasion culminated with the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. The Chinese suffered dearly at the hands of the Japanese from such atrocities as the “Rape of Nanking” where it is estimated that approximately 200,000 to 300,000 Chinese civilians died.<sup>26</sup> It is also estimated that the total number of Chinese killed during the war was as high as 6,325,000.<sup>27</sup> A semblance of stability was not established in China until the Japanese defeat in World War II and the subsequent Chinese Communist Party victory in 1949. The establishment of People’s Republic of China in October of 1949 marked the end of the Century of Humiliation and left China devastated and, more importantly, left the Chinese people with engrained memories

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*This particular span of time known as ‘The Century of Humiliation’ began in 1839 with the first Opium War and ended with the Chinese Communist Party civil war victory in 1949, and was characterized by foreign powers exploiting China.*

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Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Chinese civilization is that it is one of the oldest civilizations with a relatively continuous history of over 4000 years. This continuity has allowed for a sustained connection and passing-along of traditional beliefs from one generation to the next. Therefore, contemporary Chinese culture still maintains a strong tie to its traditional roots. The dominating factor in traditional Chinese culture is the Confucian school of thought. Confucianism favors harmony over conflict and defense over offense.<sup>19</sup> This theme is evidenced in many of the writings of Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese military strategist who was steeped in Confucian thought. In his *Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote that “to subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, Sun Tzu, in agreement with Confucianism, advocated obtaining strategic ends through nonmilitary means.

A culture steeped in Confucian themes may suggest that China will pursue peaceful rather than violent policies. Li Jijun, the former Deputy Director of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences noted that “China’s ancient strategic culture is rooted in the philosophical idea

contemporary Chinese strategic culture. Feng examined the decisionmaking of six key Chinese leaders in three major wars – the Korean War, the Sino-Indian War, and the Sino-Vietnamese War – and concluded that China’s actions during these three wars was consistent with a defensive strategic culture.”<sup>22</sup> Although China may have strong ties to its ancient Confucian culture that promote peaceful means, violent historical experiences, especially those with colonialism, have affected China’s perspective on foreign relations.

Although the documented history of Chinese civilization may extend back over 4000 years, many Chinese would want to forget a certain period of time spanning about a hundred years. This particular span of time known as “The Century of Humiliation” began in 1839 with the first Opium War and ended with the Chinese Communist Party civil war victory in 1949, and was characterized by foreign powers exploiting China. During this period of time, China lost every war it fought and was forced to accept unequal treaties that stripped the Chinese people of their land, rights, and dignity. In 1900, an “Eight Nation Alliance”



of atrocities suffered at the hands of foreign powers.

The Century of Humiliation is deeply engrained in the historical narrative of China and the events that occurred during that time have had a significant effect on China's strategic culture. Although China's Century of Humiliation ended more than 60 years ago, the sentiments are still strong within Chinese strategic culture as evidenced by General Li Jijun's speech to the US Army War College in 1997:

Before 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, more than 1000 treaties and agreements, most of which were unequal in their terms were forced upon China by the Western powers. As many as 1.8 million square kilometers were also taken away from Chinese territory. This was a period of humiliation that the Chinese can never forget. This is why the people of China show such strong emotions in matters concerning our national independence, unity, integrity of territory and sovereignty. This is also why the Chinese are so determined to safeguard them under any circumstances and at all costs.<sup>28</sup>

The loss of sovereignty to foreign powers during the Century of Humiliation was a nightmare that China never wants to relive. When its sovereignty was even slightly threatened during the Korean War as UN troops approached the Yalu River, China reluctantly yet forcefully sent troops to Korea at a cost of more than 390,000 casualties.<sup>29</sup> In China's perspective, it entered the Korean War in "self-defense" based on lessons learned from history when the Japanese

used the Korean Peninsula as a springboard to attack the Chinese mainland. China went to war accepting the fact that war with the United States would most likely set China's development back 50 years – such was the desire for complete sovereignty and security from foreign powers.

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*Before 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, more than 1000 treaties and agreements, most of which were unequal in their terms were forced upon China by the Western powers.*

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Thus, China has been committed to protecting the concept of sovereignty when defined as the "right of a state to be independent externally and supreme internally".<sup>30</sup> UN Security Council resolutions that promote the concept of limited sovereignty have been consistently denied by the Chinese in fear that they may help set a precedent that may one day come back to haunt them. Although China does support U.N. peacekeeping missions, China's national defense white paper of 2000 adamantly states, "No UN peacekeeping operations should be launched without the prior consent of the countries concerned".<sup>31</sup> However, recently, China has shown promising signs of change. In 2006, China voted to support a U.N. resolution that established the norm for international action to protect people from war crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing, if states in which those are occurring will not or cannot act.<sup>32</sup> More importantly, in late February of 2011, China voted along with all of the other members of the U.N. Security Council to approve a resolution that sanctioned Libya's rulers

and authorized seizing assets of individuals associated with the use of violence against protesters. Kori Schake from Stanford University's Hoover Institution believes that these recent events suggest that the Chinese "now feel confident enough in their international weight that they would simply

veto any resolutions against their own leadership".<sup>33</sup> Although not a superpower, China's new power may have allowed it to conquer the ghosts of its past and assume its new role as a responsible stakeholder in the international system.

A strong sense of nationalism may explain China's willingness to assume a leadership role in the international community. China's rise from the depths of its century-long humiliation to its current economic, political, and military power has been central to Chinese nationalism. "As China's comprehensive strength is incrementally mounting and her status keeps on going up in international affairs, it is a matter of great importance to strive to construct a military force that is commensurate with China's status and up to the job of defending the interests of China's development, so as to entrench China's international status."<sup>34</sup> China wants to be taken seriously by the international community and believes that developing a modern military force will command the respect of other nations. However, this equation between military strength and international power is trou-

bling to many anxious onlookers. Both the Europeans and Americans know all too well what the equation equals when calculated in context to power politics. With an autocratic, one-party government, many fear the Chinese wave of nationalism may sweep the nation into a war frenzy to right the wrongs it suffered during the Century of Humiliation.

China's increased economic and military strength may be part of rectifying past injustices. "For the Chinese there has been no greater injustice than the suffering inflicted by Japan."<sup>35</sup> The forced signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 by the Japanese was the one of the greatest humiliations suffered in Chinese history. The treaty ceded Chinese control of Korea and Taiwan to Japan and effectively stripped China of all pretenses of national power.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, there is still much anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese today. The Chinese national anthem, like the American national anthem, was written during Japan's invasion in the early 1930s. However, unlike the American national anthem which was written long ago in the War of 1812, the lyrics of the Chinese national anthem evoke strong emotions that most

elderly Chinese can still feel every time they sing along. Many believe China's volatile mix of nationalism and fear of obstruction in the international community together with its emotional war-torn past may lead China to act irrationally. Japan has routinely expressed its concern about the growth of Chinese military power and has acted to strengthen its alliance with the United States.

Japan is certainly watching China's nationalistic fervor closely, yet many believe that China's economic successes and the resulting increase in honor and respect is enough to soften any extreme nationalist movements. China's new weight in international economic councils, and the new respect given to the Chinese as hosts to the world's most powerful corporations has shifted the focus of nationalism from righting past wrongs towards economic growth and development. Professor Suisheng Zhao believes that Chinese nationalism has evolved into "pragmatic" nationalism. Pragmatic nationalism identifies China's weaknesses, mainly the lack of modernization and economic backwardness, and attempts to use any or all means available, whether modern or traditional, foreign or domestic, to improve China's status in the world.<sup>37</sup> Most China watchers today agree that this has been the dominant line of thinking among the Chinese leaders since the 1980s. Deng Xiaoping's "Four Modernizations" in agriculture, science and technology, industry, and military, set economic development and modernization as China's major strategic goals. Therefore, China's foreign policy seeks to improve its

political, economic, and security standing in Asia, to continue to build relationships with states to enhance its image, and to work to ensure the supply of strategically vital raw materials and the flow of Chinese exports. As part of this policy, China's pragmatic leaders have sought to avoid confrontation with the United States and other major powers that hold the key to its developmental and modernization goals. This strong emphasis on economic development and modernization in harmony with the rest of the international community has dominated its strategic culture in international affairs as outlined by Deng Xiaoping in his 24 Character Strategy: "Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership."<sup>38</sup> However dubious this strategy may seem, it emphasizes a low-key profile and ascribes an economic-like approach to international affairs. In this economic approach, China's costs of confrontation with the United States and the rest of the international community would far outweigh the benefits.

China seeks to achieve its economic and modernization goals in pursuit of national pride, honor, and increased international status. More importantly, China desires independence and self-sufficiency which explains why the Chinese in recent years have wanted to play a larger role defending their economic interests overseas.<sup>39</sup>

To China, international status in terms of economic prosperity, national power, and military security is inextricably related to progress in science and technology. The

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father of China's strategic missile program, Qian Xuesen warned colleagues that China must be in the lead in science and technology if it expects to maintain its international standing.<sup>40</sup> This desire to achieve global superiority in the realm of science and technology is evidenced by recent Chinese achievements in supercomputers and next-generation stealth fighters. Although a surge in science and technology may not necessarily be considered malignant in nature, Chinese discourse on its determination to become the world's leader in science and technology concerns many countries.

Throughout history, nations have rallied their scientific communities by applying sports analogies to global competition in science and technology: Americans were in a "race" to the moon; the European Union talks in terms of "winners" and "losers"; the French refer to successful companies as French national "champions".<sup>41</sup> However, the Chinese apply military undertones to its metaphors such as "intellectual warfare" and "technological front". Evan Feigenbaum believes China's choice of metaphors reflects "the central role of the military in China's emergence as a modern state".<sup>42</sup> Military programs and government funding often serve as a catalyst for industrialization and state-building - a point in case being the United States during World War II and the Cold War. However, in the case of China, there exists a troubling paradox: The distinctly military approach to technology and development - its ideologies, policy choices, and organizational solutions - that emerged during China's period of greatest external

threat have continued to manifest themselves even as China enjoys its most benign strategic environment in more than 160 years.<sup>43</sup> The predominant role of the Chinese military in the development of technology explains why much of China's emphasis is on weapons technology. It further explains how China's strategic policy equates technological development, specifically advanced military technology, to the status of its national power and international standing. Robert Reich, a political economist defined the phenomenon as "technonationalism".<sup>44</sup> For example, when China successfully tested its first atomic bomb in October of 1964, the world was forced to take seriously the country it once considered to be "backward".

Although China's technology infrastructure has evolved from its narrow military technology aims towards a broader high-technology sector, the elites remain highly attached to the military. Ultimately, the strong military undertones,

opment - the military undertones apply the totality of war and military operations towards becoming a global leader in technology. The Chinese believe that achieving technological superiority as well as self-sufficiency will guarantee their "manifest destiny" - China's rightful place in the world. However, with an autocratic government that uses force at will to subdue its people, a strategic culture that values technological superiority with military zeal may be a force for instability.

Although these three aspects of Chinese strategic culture - traditional culture, historical experiences, and nationalism - provide only a basic overview, they are enough to form a base with which to identify with China's history, motivations, and goals that inform its strategic culture. Furthermore, each of these three aspects show that the Chinese act in accordance with a set of guiding beliefs that may not necessarily collide with those of the United States.



China's Xi Jinping shakes hands with President Obama (Getty Images)

in both metaphors and practice, manifest themselves in China's attitude towards technological devel-

## Implications for US Policy

The purpose of the analysis of Chinese Strategic Culture was to



attempt to explain the reasons why the Chinese have stepped up their military development. By exposing and understanding China's historic fear of foreign influence and its fear of having its "manifest destiny" obstructed, US leaders will be less likely to overact to, miscalculate, or misinterpret China's actions.

they may be, it provides a rational explanation as to why the Chinese have undertaken a vast military modernization program. However, the United States and the rest of the world should be worried if the Chinese utilize its new found military power the same way the United States has in the past. Just

as the desired outcomes for both sides are in direct opposition to each other. However, a US understanding of China's goal of national unification with Taiwan may help avoid antagonistic actions. For example, before October of 2008, the US and Chinese military conducted military-to-military programs that encouraged communication and cooperation between the two militaries. Yet when the US announced a 6.5 billion dollar arms sale to Taiwan in October, the military cooperative programs ceased. The US should try to revive these lines of communication with the Chinese military in order to "minimize misconceptions and the chances for conflict".<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, to counter the conflict over Taiwan, the US should continue its policies that engage China's modernization and economic goals. This "constructive engagement" will work to further integrate China into the international community and encourage greater cooperation on both economic and security measures. Ultimately, economic interests provide a common ground between the United States and China that can be utilized to bring about further advances in the strategic relationship.

Unfortunate events such as the US Navy's EP-3 collision with a Chinese fighter jet as well as the accidental US bombing of the Chinese embassy have fueled the perceptions of an intense conflict between the US and China. However, after analyzing China's strategic culture, much of the tension between the United States and China can be attributed to misconceptions and misunderstandings while, in fact, the United States and China have much in

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*much of the tension between the United States and China can be attributed to misconceptions and misunderstandings while, in fact, the United States and China have much in common with abounding potential for friendly relations.*

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China's vast military modernization in the face of no imminent threats is commonly cited by the United States as a concern for global stability. Yet when looking back at US history, can Chinese behavior be considered so radical? After the Civil War, Americans were at their most secure state than ever before - the Union had been restored and the great European powers were beginning to retreat from the Western Hemisphere. Yet, no sooner than in the 1880s did the US begin a "peacetime naval buildup and create of a new battle-ship fleet that within two decades made America one of the top naval powers in the world".<sup>45</sup> The fact that power changes nations can be pointed to as the explanation for the peacetime military buildup. As the United States began to grow in its power, it became more ambitious, and began fielding a military that was commensurate with its state power and in-line with its ambitions. By applying a similar rationale towards China's peacetime military buildup, China's behavior does not seem so radical. Although this lesson does not pacify China's true military intentions, whatever

in the past two decades alone, the US conducted ten military interventions. In the interest of US and China relations, the United States should consider how its actions influence Chinese perceptions of American foreign policy.

This baseline conceptual understanding of Chinese strategic culture allows for the formulation of corresponding US policy implications. Based on the discussion above, the United States should recognize China's sensitivity to foreign intervention, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty. Specifically, with ten military interventions in the past two decades, the United States should consider how these actions play into China's strategic culture and how China perceives these actions with respect to its history and experiences. Ultimately, the issue of territorial integrity entails conflict over Taiwan. "Chinese leaders consider national unification as a sacred trust and the reunification of Taiwan a top strategic objective."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the tension over Taiwan may be a perpetual source of conflict for the US and China

common with abounding potential for friendly relations. Therefore, US national security policymakers should dispel the “China Threat” thesis for it is as dangerous as it is misleading. In addition to potential political and military ramifications, continuing to subscribe to this theory may cost the US, literally. A study commissioned by Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars warns that the “China Threat” thesis may cause the US to miss out on China’s massive foreign investments. “If political interference is not tempered, some of the benefits of Chinese investment — such as job creation, consumer welfare and even contributions to US infrastructure renewal — risk being diverted to our competitors.”<sup>48</sup> With over two trillion dollars of foreign investment available in Chinese markets, the US could lose big. The potential political and military consequences may be just as disparaging.

The relationship between the US and China is too big an issue to disregard or take a ‘wait and see’ approach. Furthermore, it is critical that the United States get the China issue right. A US initiative to understand Chinese strategic culture may be the first major step towards achieving a healthy and stable relationship with China, and would be a best first step in the Obama administration’s “pivot towards Asia.”

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# China During the Cold War

## A Billion People on a Lonely Island

MATTHEW IBARRA AND MICHAEL O'KELLEY

China was one of the central players in the two major Asian conflicts of the Cold War, yet it was a lonely island for the majority of this ideological conflict. From 1946 to 1991, the United States never had fewer than 21 alliance partners, the Soviet Union never had fewer than 8 alliance partners, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) never had more than two.<sup>1</sup> This evidence gives a glimpse of China's larger difficulties throughout the Cold War of gaining or maintaining strong relations with other states. In order to understand these difficulties, this paper presents a narrative of the PRC's relations with the Soviet Union and United States through the Cold War. While many factors were present in both these relationships, one element stands as a constant for the large part of this period: Mao Zedong. Mao's personal vision for the future of China and failure to appreciate the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union allowed him to share warm relations with both sides during portions of this conflict. Nevertheless, Mao's erratic behavior and pretentious belief in Communist China estranged the Soviets and Americans alike. Although Mao was able to experience warm relations with the



Soviets and Americans in his lifetime, his skewed international perspective and willingness to play both sides generated much suspicion and negatively impacted Chinese foreign policy. China's initial alliance with the Soviet Union and eventual conciliatory relationship with the United States has more to do with foreign willingness to work with China than with Mao's foreign policy skills.

### Sino-Soviet Relationship

China and the Soviet Union shared a unique disunity throughout the Cold War. Stalin's interest in China and Mao's respect for Stalin seemed to be the perfect combination for a long-lasting, peaceful

relationship. However, the same tendencies that brought these two states together in Stalin's lifetime created rifts that would push them apart shortly after his death. In reality, Stalin appears to be the glue that held the relationship together, in spite of unresolved tensions between the Soviet Union and China from the Chinese Communist Revolution and Mao's eclectic philosophy. Mao Zedong's curious personality traits fooled even his closest advisors and made relations with any state difficult. His aggrandizement of China grew steadily

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Second Lieutenants MATTHEW IBARRA and MICHAEL O'KELLEY are both Class of 2012 Scholars.

over the years, turning a loyal following of the Soviets into a competition for global leadership. By the 1960s, Sino-Soviet relations were so degraded that these two communist powers engaged in armed conflict.

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*Although Stalin's interest in China fostered a positive initial relationship between China and the Soviet Union, it also fueled Mao's "China first" line of thinking, deepening a strategic rift between the Chinese and Soviets that would eventually overpower their ideological ties.*

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The relationship between China and the Soviet Union was fairly strong at the start of the Cold War. As early as 1927, Chinese Communists were taking orders from Stalin, so it was not a surprise that when the Communists came to power they looked to foster stronger ties to their parent country.<sup>2</sup> Mao was ideologically aligned with the Soviets, and fear of a potential US attack on the new Chinese government helped to solidify the Sino-Soviet relationship.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Mao had a very positive and respectful view of Stalin. He is even described as having a devotion to Stalin that "approached that of a fan for a superstar."<sup>4</sup> One possible reason for this is that Stalin seemed to care about China where others simply did not. Mao, being educated in the traditional Chinese belief that China is the "central kingdom" of the world, would have welcomed any attention received from outside. In fact, John Lewis Gaddis goes so far as to say that "[t]he idea that China could be a

peripheral and not a vital concern for anyone was difficult for [Mao] to grasp."<sup>5</sup>

Although Stalin's interest in China fostered a positive initial relationship between China and the Soviet Union, it also fueled Mao's "China first" line of thinking, deepening a strategic rift between the Chinese and Soviets that would eventually overpower their ideological ties. Mao was a strict Marxist, according to his own interpretation of Marxism, but he still believed that the primary issue of the Cold War was China's future and not the ideological split between the Soviets and Americans. Donald Zagoria posited in 1974 that China's ties to the Soviet Union and attempted relations with the United States in the Cold War appear to be driven by material needs over ideological ones.<sup>6</sup> In 1997, John Lewis Gaddis echoed this belief in a comprehensive recap of the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Because the ideological issue of the Cold War was not at the forefront of Mao's mind, he would not have completely understood the US goal of "detach[ing] China as an effective ally of the USSR."<sup>8</sup> In Mao's view, the whole world should be interested in China.

Following this line of thinking, it should come as no surprise that Mao made repeated attempts to develop amicable relations with the United States. In 1954 he made the statement that "countries of different systems can peacefully coexist."<sup>9</sup> Initially, Mao looked to the United States as a means to help him defeat the Nationalists.<sup>10</sup> Mao also saw the United States as the only country able to help the Chinese rebuild after World War II.<sup>11</sup> Hopes for this relationship

were initially destroyed in 1946 when the United States sided with the Nationalists against Mao.<sup>12</sup> But in 1949, Mao and some members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) again explored the possibility of peacefully building Sino-US relations.<sup>13</sup>

Mao may have viewed this courting of the United States as a benign attempt to place China in a seat of glory, but the Soviets were much more cautious of him afterwards. It was almost as if his dedication to the communist cause was wavering. I.V. Kovalev, Stalin's representative in China, warned Stalin of Mao's questionable loyalty.<sup>14</sup> It was not helpful that one of Mao's attempts to establish relations with the United States came shortly after he eliminated the "28 Bolsheviks" of the CCP who were trained in Moscow and more loyal to the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> Of course, in 1954, Mao would suddenly and inexplicably redact his strategy of peaceful relations toward the United States, but that issue will be covered in a moment. The important point here is that Stalin's interest in China and strong hopes for its future brought China and the Soviet Union together but also encouraged Mao's belief in the primacy of China that would cause him to seek stronger relations with the United States despite the damage it caused to the Sino-Soviet relationship.

Another facet of this relationship that initially brought China and the Soviet Union together was Mao's devotion to Stalin as the global leader of communism. This devotion was encouraged by the Confucian tradition of *li*, or proper respect for one's superior. Although Mao would go to great lengths to replace China's Con-

fucian foundations with Marxist ideals, *li* was a social tradition that had not yet been eradicated from Mao's thinking. This adherence to *li*, however, would be one of the contributing factors that prevented Mao from seeing eye to eye with the Soviets.

In a 1949 meeting between Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, and Stalin, attempted goodwill by both sides was received as outright offense. Congruent with the traditional concept of *li*, the Chinese revered the Soviets as the global leader of Communism, so when Stalin expressed in a toast his wish that the Chinese may one day surpass the Soviets, the Chinese delegates refused to drink.<sup>16</sup> This was taken as an offensive gesture by the Soviets, and the rest of the meeting was woefully unproductive. The respect Mao showed Stalin because of *li* is not to be confused as Mao valuing Stalin's ideals or leadership more than he valued China. The fact that the Chinese delegation did not drink to Stalin's toast does not represent their disagreement with the idea of China surpassing Russia as much as it represents their willingness to provide Stalin the opportunity to save face in front of the delegation and his advisors. Mao and his followers' primary concern was still to see China rise to greatness.

In spite of the profuse goodwill Mao and Stalin shared towards each other, their relationship was shrouded in unresolved issues about the mechanics of the Chinese Communist Revolution. The initial hiccups in the relationship lie largely with the fact that the Soviets did not recognize the Marxist revolution happening until Mao dealt the final blow to the Nationalist

government.<sup>17</sup> When Mao decided to cross the Yangtze River and take over the country, he did so against the advice of Stalin.<sup>18</sup> This is not to say Stalin was against the communist revolution. It is likely that he feared the CCP would be defeated and communism in China would die out altogether. Furthermore, Stalin very diplomatically praised Mao after his military victory with the words, "[w]inners should not be blamed," vindicating Mao for acting against his advice.<sup>19</sup> However, a lingering resentment remained. In 1956 Mao reflected on the legacy left by Stalin and told the CCP Politburo, "Stalin has wronged China."<sup>20</sup>

One of the final problems with the initial Sino-Soviet relationship lies with Mao Zedong himself. His cryptic personality confused even his closest advisors and made relations with nearly any state impossible. On 7 July 1954, Mao met with his advisors and diplomat Zhou Enlai to solidify the Chinese position in the ongoing Geneva Conference.<sup>21</sup> Mao presented a clear policy of increased cooperation with the United States. Michael Sheng's explanation of what followed paints a clear picture of Mao's eclectic and confusing philosophy:

However, two weeks later, Mao would abandon this policy orientation abruptly with no explanation and no discussion in the CCP leadership whatsoever. In late July 1954, Zhou Enlai succeeded in impressing the world with his diplomatic skills in the Geneva Conference, which ended the Indochina conflict. Unfortunately, Mao suddenly decided to create an international crisis in the Taiwan Strait, and he did so by blaming Zhou Enlai.<sup>22</sup>

Mao's sudden switch from peace with the United States to aggressive liberation of Taiwan was not the only time he caught his close advisers off guard. Mao's habits as a leader of guerilla warfare were to employ "concealment and surprise," even against his closest and longest allies.<sup>23</sup> Thus, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao divided and attacked many of his longtime supporters for fear of them bandwagoning together against him.<sup>24</sup> "Liu Shaoqi died in anonymous ignominy. Deng Xiaoping's son was crippled. Among Mao's senior-most Long March colleagues, he protected only the loyal Zhou Enlai who was needed to try to hold the country together."<sup>25</sup> Mao's unpredictable behavior made any alliance difficult, and the Soviets were no exception.

These seeds of discord that were spread during Stalin's lifetime bloomed fully after his death in 1953. Mao's belief in China's greatness, and Stalin's affirmation of this belief, led Mao to separate from reliance on the Soviets. The first sign of trouble came in 1954, with the purge of Gao Gang.<sup>26</sup> Gao was a prominent member of the CCP who believed China should defer more to Soviet leadership. Mao feared the Chinese had gone too far in showing preference to the Soviets. This is the same year Mao began attacking offshore islands held by the Nationalists in an attempt to deter the United States from engaging in a defense agreement with the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan.<sup>27</sup> His attempts backfired, but his actions against both the Soviets and Americans indicate a growing faith in Chinese national power. Without a strong leader like Stalin to command



Mao's respect, he went on believing in China's ability to act independently. In 1959, he also broke off a carefully-negotiated nuclear collaboration arrangement with the Soviets that had not even been in effect for two years and purged the CCP member who negotiated the arrangement.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the general independence Mao was seeking from Soviet influence, his personal relationships with Soviet leaders after Stalin were racked with friction. As Gaddis explains, "One might explain this unexpected [rift in Sino-Soviet relations] by the fact that Khrushchev and Mao, from the time they first met in Beijing in 1954, appear to have loathed one another as well as their respective surroundings."<sup>29</sup> Khrushchev was not willing to praise the Chinese in the same way Stalin had. In fact, he called the Chinese atmosphere in Beijing "nauseating."<sup>30</sup> Mao reciprocated Khrushchev's disdain, and in 1958 he received the Soviet leader wearing swimming trunks to show his low opinion.<sup>31</sup> Khrushchev was not the only Soviet leader whom Mao did not like. None of the prominent Soviet leaders after Stalin cared to earn Mao's respect or take his interests into consideration.<sup>32</sup> Mao's own aggrandizement of China went on unchecked, and in 1959, Mao argued with the Russians that his country should be the global leader of communism.<sup>33</sup> This breaking-down of Sino-Soviet relations in the 1950s would have serious implications in the following decade.

In 1962, Mao was sorely disappointed with the Soviet decision to back down in the Cuban Missile Crisis. He believed the Communist powers had the ability to put

Western capitalists in their place, and he was undoubtedly ashamed of Khrushchev's unwillingness to save face and stick to his guns. He also had declared his desire to obtain nuclear weapons, which he no longer seemed to view as mere "paper tigers."<sup>34</sup> Mao's unwilling-

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*The Soviets realized Mao's megalomaniac tendencies had gotten out of hand, and in 1964 they discussed with the United States the possibility of a joint preemptive strike against Chinese nuclear development.*

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ness to work within the delicate framework of Soviet-US relations alarmed the Soviets, who by now realized he was not acting rationally. Mao himself told the Soviets "we're not afraid of getting into trouble with other countries."<sup>35</sup> He even went so far as to tell Khrushchev, "Maybe we can get the United States to drop an atom bomb on Fujian."<sup>36</sup> The Soviets realized Mao's megalomaniac tendencies had gotten out of hand, and in 1964 they discussed with the United States the possibility of a joint preemptive strike against Chinese nuclear development.<sup>37</sup> Although this plan never came to fruition, the Soviets and Chinese did experience open conflict in 1969 over a disputed island in the Russian Far East.<sup>38</sup>

This tension in relations with the Soviet Union was ultimately met by an opening of relations with the United States. By this time, it seemed to Mao that the Soviets had betrayed the call of Marxism. The time had come for China to

lead the global communist order, and it could communicate this to the world through relations with the United States. The opening of US relations also satisfied pragmatic concerns. In spite of the poor relations China shared with Russia, these two states were still deeply intertwined. Mao feared he was too heavily reliant upon the Soviets, and needed the Americans to counterbalance the Soviet pull.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in 1972, Mao welcomed Richard Nixon into China and began the process of warming relations with the United States.<sup>40</sup> This final affront strained the Sino-Soviet relationship for the remainder of the Cold War. Mao's actions were wholly congruent with his grandiose views of China, but as a result he never saw Sino-Soviet relations restored to the strength they had during Stalin's lifetime.

### Sino-American Relationship

No single characterization can define Sino-US relations throughout the Cold War. As US involvement in Asia fluctuated, national leaders changed, the international environment shifted, and regional alliances altered, Sino-US relations also transformed. Throughout the Cold War three major phases characterize the Sino-US relationship. The first phase, ideological opposition and open hostility, takes place from 1945 to 1972. It begins with the failure of the Marshall Mission and concludes with President Nixon's visit to China. The second phase marks a period of transition in the nature of the Sino-US relationship, taking place from 1972 to 1979. The third phase, normalization, begins in 1979 with the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and continues through the conclusion

of the Cold War. Regardless of the phase, China's relationship with the US was primarily the result of characteristics of China's leader and US actions in the region.

City.”<sup>42</sup> The last US assumption resulted from victory over Japan. After soundly defeating the Japanese government in WWII and replacing this militaristic regime

with the United States.<sup>44</sup> This cooperative spirit, however, quickly shifted with General George C. Marshall's diplomatic mission to China. The objective of the Marshall Mission was to negotiate with the Chinese Communists and the Chinese Nationalists to create a unified, non-Communist government. This attempted diplomatic mission lasted two years, officially ending in January of 1947.<sup>45</sup> Instead of successfully ending the Chinese Civil War and preventing the establishment of a Chinese Communist Government, the mission perpetuated the conflict, demonstrated US priorities in the region, and provoked Mao's distrust of the US<sup>46</sup>

#### *Phase One: Ideological Opposition and Open Hostility (1946-1972)*

The first phase of Sino-US Cold War relations begins with the conclusion of the failed Marshall Mission. The United States entered this phase of relations with the awareness that they failed to prevent the establishment of a Chinese Communist Government. Because the United States and the international community, to include the Soviet Union, expressed their support for the Chinese Nationalists even after they were ousted from Beijing, they began their relationship with the PRC in opposition.<sup>47</sup> Further complicating the US relationship with Mao was the United States' adamant opposition to the Soviet Union and its communist ideology. Having clearly stated his commitment to containing the Soviet sphere of influence, the Truman Doctrine established the tone of Sino-US relations until the Nixon Administration.<sup>48</sup> Any cooperative relationship between the United



President Nixon meets Chairman Mao, 1972 (National Archives)

Immediately after the conclusion of WWII, the United States possessed certain assumptions that would contribute to the hostile relationship between the US and China during the first half of the Cold War. The first US assumption concerns self-perception. The United States saw itself as an innocent nation in relation to the other nations in the international community. This self-perception was attributable to democratic values and an anti-colonial history.<sup>41</sup> The second US assumption described the US mission in Asia, a mission to extend democratic principles and virtues to the region. In the 1940s, one US Senator went as far as to assert that “we [the US] shall lift Shanghai up, ever up, God willing, until it is just like Kansas

with a democratic government, the United States felt like it could achieve anything in the region.<sup>43</sup> These assumptions contributed towards the hostility that would develop between the two nations. Not only did the focus on democratic values conflict with the Marxist-Leninist ideology of Mao, but also the perception of American innocence and confidence encouraged the United States to marginalize Mao's communist regime.

Unlike US assumptions, which pre-disposed the Sino-US relationship to hostility, Mao initially showed a willingness to work with the United States. Following WWII, Mao believed he could establish a collaborative link and eventually open up direct talks



States and the PRC would be impossible as long as China possessed close ties with the Soviet Union.

From the perspective of the PRC, there were several factors that made the Sino-US relationship susceptible to hostility. The first factor was Mao's initial commitment to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which he would eventually transform into his own brand of communism—Maoism. This ideological commitment encouraged the belief that history was on the side of the PRC. Capitalism and the Western imperialists were bound to follow the path of feudalism and other failed systems of government.<sup>49</sup> Mao's commitment to communism also helped create a strong connection between Beijing and the Kremlin early in the Cold War. Mao looked to the Stalin for advice and support and used the Soviet example as a model for development.<sup>50</sup> Considering the US commitment to contain communism and their hostility towards the Soviet Union, the fact that the Sino-US relationship was hostile should not be surprising.

Another important factor to consider is the traditional Chinese perception of their nation as the "Middle Kingdom." This perception is based on historical aspirations of cultural glory and political dominance of Asia.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, China's traditional position of regional superiority contributed to Mao's inability to see China as a peripheral actor in the Cold War. In his eyes, China was equal to the United States and the Soviet Union. He could not understand why his nation was being treated as anything other than a major player in the international community.<sup>52</sup>

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*Mao interpreted US involvement in Korea as evidence of hostility towards the PRC. As a result, he was more than willing to intervene by providing assistance to the North. Although the war ended with an armistice in 1953, Mao considered China's involvement in Korea a success despite heavy troop losses because he demonstrated that China could effectively confront the United States.*

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Exacerbating the hostile relationship between the United States and China were the actions the United States took in the region, which heightened Mao's fears of an American intervention in China. The political, economic, and brief military support the United States provided the Chinese Nationalists set the stage for how later US actions would be interpreted by the communist regime.<sup>53</sup> Not only did the United States provide the Nationalists with economic and military support at the beginning of the Chinese Civil War, but the United States also gave them the political recognition they would deny Mao for several years, earning Chiang Kai-Shek the international legitimacy that would allow his government to survive.<sup>54</sup> Given this political environment it is hard to blame Mao for his interpretation of US military action in the region.

The Korean War is the first major US military action in Asia after WWII. Although technically a United Nations response to the invasion of South Korea by Communist North Korea, the action can be considered a US response given that the preponderance of UN forces were comprised of US forces.<sup>55</sup> Despite US intentions to halt communism, Mao interpreted US involvement in Korea as evidence of hostility towards the PRC. As a result, he was more than willing to intervene by providing

assistance to the North. Although the war ended with an armistice in 1953, Mao considered China's involvement in Korea a success despite heavy troop losses because he demonstrated that China could effectively confront the United States.<sup>56</sup>

The next military action taken by the United States was executed in order to preserve neutrality. In order to stop the Nationalists from invading Mainland China and in order to discourage the communists from invading Taiwan, the United States deployed naval ships to patrol the Taiwan Strait. Mao, however, did not interpret the actions as intended. He saw the deployment as preparation for an invasion. Although he did not respond militarily to this preserved threat, the deployment amplified his fear of US intervention, continuing the trend of hostility.<sup>57</sup>

The Vietnam War is a far less straightforward case. Although the conflict started during the hostile phase of the Sino-US relationship, the conflict's conclusion would contribute to the eventual shift in the relationship. For Mao, the conflict began with his eager support for Ho Chi Minh initially against the French and later the United States. If successful, Vietnam would provide Mao a buffer zone between China and any outside hostility, enhancing China's secu-



city.<sup>58</sup> For the United States, Vietnam, like Korea, was another attempt to contain communism. The United States entered the conflict in order to push back Ho Chi Minh's attempt to bring communism to the south.<sup>59</sup> Vietnam was another battlefield on which US-Chinese hostility played out.

### *Phase Two: Transition in the Sino-US Relationship (1972-1979)*

The transition of the Sino-US relations began with President Nixon's visit to China in 1972. This visit was the first by a US President to the PRC. Prior to 1972, China and the United States were unwavering adversaries. Following the visit, the relationship became more conciliatory.<sup>60</sup> For China, the Soviet Union soon replaced the United States as the nation's primary security concern.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, in addition to the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations, the United States and the PRC also started to exchange of trade, culture, and tourism. The Sino-US relationship is not the only relationship that improved during the 1970s. Many of the United States' allies followed suit and established diplomatic ties with the PRC.<sup>62</sup>

The conclusion of the Vietnam War also contributed to transition. Unlike Korea, this conflict concluded with a success for communism. Ho Chi Minh was able to spread his government into the south and the United States was forced to retreat in 1973.<sup>63</sup> This retreat marked the beginning of the shift in Mao's perception of the United States. In his eyes, the US defeat in Vietnam "mark[ed] the end of a quarter century of American mili-

tary expansion in East Asia."<sup>64</sup> As a result, the United States no longer generated the same security concerns for Mao.

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 is another important component of the transition in Sino-US relations. His death coincided with a relaxation of communist ideology in the PRC.<sup>65</sup> With Deng Xiaoping's rise to power came a shift in China's economic policy.<sup>66</sup> As China became more accepting of market-oriented economic policies, China's incentives for normalizing relations with the international community grew. This shift in economic policy would be a major stepping-stone to the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and China.<sup>67</sup>

### *Phase Three: Normalization (1979 through the Conclusion of the Cold War)*

Normalization of the Sino-US relationship would occur during the Carter Administration. Building off the work of his predecessors, President Carter was able to officially reestablish diplomatic relations between the U.S and China. Through the 1979 Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relation, the United States accepted the Chinese stance that there is only one China, which includes Taiwan, and ended official recognition of Taiwan.<sup>68</sup> Unofficial recognition was maintained, however, through the Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>69</sup>

### **Trends in Sino-US Relations**

All three phases of Sino-US relations during the Cold War are unique. From 1946-1972, the United States and the PRC were

fervently opposed to one another. The second phase, ending in 1979, represents a time of transition. Starting with President Nixon's visit, the United States and China abandoned their hostile rhetoric and became conciliatory towards one another. 1979 and the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations brought with it the third phase of Sino-US relations—normalization.

Despite their unique qualities, all three phases resulted from similar sources. A major causal factor was US actions in Asia. Their support of Chiang Kai-Shek, their intervention in Korea, their naval deployment to the Taiwan Strait, and their involvement in Vietnam precipitated the PRC's belief that the United States possessed a major security threat. The transition phase begins with US action as well. President Nixon's visit to the PRC and the US defeat in Vietnam reconciled Mao's fears and led the two nations down the path towards normalization. This normalization was also partially the result of US action, namely their involvement in the 1979 Joint Communiqué.

The other major factor was the PRC's leaders. Mao Zedong's commitment to communism, as well as his strong ties with Stalin, made hostility with the United States almost unavoidable. Furthermore, his fears of US intervention, justifiable or not, encouraged conflict between the United States and the PRC. Transition was facilitated by a shift in Mao's perception. As his perception of the threat the Soviet Union posed to the PRC grew, his fears of the United States declined. Mao's death and his replacement by Deng Xiaoping, also brought

about another shift in Chinese policy, this time economic.

## Conclusion

Throughout the Cold War, China attempted to utilize its relationship with the Soviet Union and the United States to improve its own nation's standing. Mao's traditional belief in the supremacy of China and its historic role as the 'Central Kingdom' drastically impacted China's international relationships. No world leader believed China was as important as Mao believed. Furthermore, Mao underappreciated the ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although he would initially attempt to simultaneously cultivate his relationship with the Soviet Union and the United States, ideology would align Mao with Stalin and propagate conflict between the PRC and the United States. Mao's erratic behavior would only complicate both relations. Only two weeks after his commitment to warming relations with the United States in 1954, he began attacking islands governed by the ROC which were under consideration for US protection. Likewise, after Stalin's death in 1953, Mao's behaviors and beliefs would make it difficult for future Soviet leader to preserve the Sino-Soviet relationship. As a result, the PRC was isolated from both major powers until Sino-US relations improved in 1972. Although Mao's contributions to the improvement of this relationship cannot be ignored, post-1972 Sino-US relations were also heavily impacted by changing regional conditions and US persistence. Mao's foreign policy legacy cannot ignore the initial Sino-Soviet alliance or the post-1972 Sino-US cooperation;

however, it would be misleading to fail to expand upon these relationships. At the onset of the Cold War, Mao failed to recognize the realities of the international system. This lack of understanding eroded the Sino-Soviet relationship after Stalin's death and unnecessarily postponed cooperation between the PRC and the United States.

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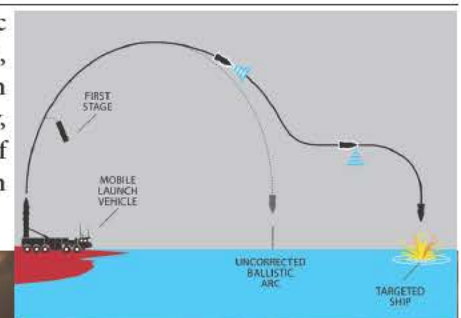
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As this issue of ASJ goes to press, China has unilaterally declared that its territorial waters now include the South China Sea. Prior to its declaration, there has been much fanfare in the media over images of the recently-deployed DS-21 Anti Ship Ballistic Missile, also known as the "carrier killer." With a range of over 1000 miles, it could reach US warships transiting the South China Sea. The mobile truck-launched system makes the missile hard to target prior to launch, and Chinese publicity suggests an intent to overwhelm a US Navy carrier task force's defensive capabilities with multiple salvo launches. The images suggest an effort to deter the US from interfering in Chinese naval affairs, perhaps as a prelude to its efforts to control commerce through – and claim of ownership of resources in – the South China Sea. --the Editors



Images: Left, CIA graphic of South China Sea; Right, *Popular Mechanics* diagram of DS-21 trajectory; Below, Chinese military graphic of incoming warheads, reprinted in *DefenseNews*.





# Feeding Paper Tigers

## Unintended Consequences of American Missile Defense in the Pacific

DAVID BEESON

The thesis of Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson* is that "the art of economics consists in looking not merely at the immediate but at the longer effects of any act or policy; it consists in tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups."<sup>1</sup> President Obama must heed those words carefully as he decides how to respond to North Korea's developing nuclear program. The President's current initiative to increase American missile defense in the Pacific may sound like a responsible plan to protect the nation from the whims of an irrational dictator, but the decision to bolster missile defense will likely lead to a host of unintended consequences.

The Chinese have already stated they will improve their own nuclear arsenal in light of the American response to North Korea's nuclear showboating. China's decision will in turn impact the policies of India and Pakistan as those two countries compete with China in a precarious triangle of regional instability. As Mao Zedong put it, the "paper tiger" of stockpiled nuclear weapons – those that are unlikely to be used but will need to be built and maintained nonetheless – will grow with each new disturbance to the status quo. In order

to assess the unintended consequences of the new American policy, this essay will explore contemporary research on the Chinese nuclear strategy, the capabilities of American missile defense, and the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia. Based on those three considerations, it will be clear that

strength."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, a scholar at the Monterey Institute of International Studies said, "I don't see how adding 14 more [ground-based interceptors] along the Pacific Coast by 2017 will substantially change the North Koreans' perception of the system's well known abysmal performance."<sup>4</sup>

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the United States should forgo any missile defense developments in the Pacific and rely on other means to contain the North Korean threat.

### American Response to North Korean Activity

It is important to first consider the domestic reaction to the Pentagon's decision to "spend \$1 billion to expand the West Coast-based missile defense system from 30 to 44 ground-based interceptors in California and Alaska"<sup>2</sup> Congressman Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, stated, "President Obama is finally realizing what President Reagan taught us 30 years ago – the best way to keep the peace is through

Pentagon officials also stated that "the new deployment is intended to send a signal to China, which tried but failed to block the more recent [North Korean] nuclear test."<sup>5</sup> Clearly there are conflicting views on the President's decision and some people are even recognizing that the policy may have an impact on China, but so far these analyses are only surface deep.

### Chinese Response to American Activity

The idea that China will improve its own nuclear arsenal in response to American missile defense is not merely speculation; it is already

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Second Lieutenant DAVID BEESON is a Scholar and Class of 2013 Astronautical Engineering major



**Chinese launch of Shenzhou 7 Manned Spacecraft** (Univertoday.com)

happening. Keith Bradsher of the *New York Times* wrote that “China is moving ahead with the development of a new and more capable generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched missiles, increasing its existing ability to deliver nuclear warheads to the United States and to overwhelm missile defense systems.”<sup>6</sup> One of the most significant advances in the Chinese arsenal is “the capability to put as many as 10 nuclear warheads on an ICBM, although dummy warheads could be substituted for some of the nuclear warheads. The dummy warheads would have heat and electromagnetic devices designed to trick missile defense systems.”<sup>7</sup> This has major implications for the United States and other regional powers because “as [the Chinese] begin to field a force of missiles with multiple warheads, it means everything [the world] assumes about the size of their nuclear arsenal becomes wrong.”<sup>8</sup> China is also “testing submarine-launched missiles, which it could use to outflank American missile defense detection systems”<sup>9</sup> Rather than making America safer, missile

defense is already proving to be a powerful motivator for China to create more deadly missiles.

Although China’s actions may have regionally destabilizing consequences, the United States has not been sending a consistent message to Beijing regarding the offensive-defensive escalatory spiral. President Obama has “tried to reassure China that [America’s] limited ballistic missile defenses are designed only to shoot down one or a few missiles launched by a rogue state.” But at the same time, “missile defense advocates in the United States favor more ambitious, and also far costlier, systems.” Understandably, this “spirited debate has been followed with nervousness in Beijing.”<sup>10</sup> A professor of international relations at Renmin University acknowledged the confusion by stating, “I have no doubt that one of the goals of the missile defenses is to contain threats from North Korea, but objectively speaking, a high-tech expansion of US military biceps impacts China, too.” He added that discussions had taken place in China on whether to develop missile defense systems as well.<sup>11</sup>

It would be easy to assume China is simply capitalizing on an internationally condoned opportunity to improve its own nuclear capabilities, but historical trends tell a far different story.

## Chinese Nuclear Policy

The history of Chinese nuclear development is a case study in prudence and rationality. Beginning in the Cold War, “although China engaged in security competition with the United States and Soviet Union, it never sought to match their nuclear capabilities or strategies, even partially, despite possessing enough fissile material with which to build a larger, more capable arsenal.”<sup>12</sup> Instead, M. Taylor Fravel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Evan Medeiros of the National Security Council believe that “the notion of assured retaliation, or deterring an adversary with the threat of unacceptable damage through a retaliatory nuclear strike, offers a useful framework for understanding the evolution of China’s nuclear strategy and force structure.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the Chinese do not feel the need to match weapon for weapon the nuclear arsenals other nations (namely the US and Russia); they only want the capability to strike back if they are struck first.

China has been remarkably consistent with this nuclear philosophy even since the days of Mao Zedong. The influential Chinese leader “viewed nuclear weapons, primarily and probably exclusively, as tools for deterring nuclear aggression and countering coercion, not as weapons to be used in combat to accomplish discrete military objectives.”<sup>14</sup> Mao believed

that “nuclear weapons are principally useful for two reasons: deterring a nuclear attack and countering nuclear coercion.”<sup>15</sup>

It is also important to realize that the Chinese view of nuclear weapons is distinctly un-Western. The authors point out that one reason Mao likely disparaged the atomic bomb as a “paper tiger” was to persuade the Chinese public not to be intimidated by the highly destructive weapons possessed by China’s opponents.<sup>16</sup> This is an interesting contrast to the “duck and cover” hysteria in America during the same time period. Mao also stated, “We want to have not only more planes and heavy artillery, but also the atomic bomb. In today’s world, if we don’t want to be bullied, then we cannot do without this thing.”<sup>17</sup> This makes sense considering the Chinese were still recovering their dignity after the Opium Wars from a century earlier and the Japanese invasion during World War II. Based on the desire to prevent China from ever being coerced in the future, Mao foresaw that “China may produce a few atomic bombs, but we by no means intend to use them. Although we do not intend to use them, why produce them? We will use them as a defensive weapon.” And a few months later he said, “We don’t wish to have too many atomic bombs ourselves. What would we do with so many? To have a few is just fine.”<sup>18</sup> Mao’s views add confidence to the argument that China is a rational actor on the nuclear stage and thinks in terms of deterrence and retaliation rather than aggression or coercion.

In 1987, a Chinese nuclear doctrine began to emerge. A government document from that

year stated the four principles of Chinese nuclear policy were “centralized control, strike only after the enemy has struck, close defense, and key point counterstrikes.”<sup>19</sup> Several years later in 1994, China participated in Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. Preparing for the conference was

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*the technological capability of China’s nuclear arsenal is directly linked to the capabilities of American missile defense. As America develops new missile defense technologies, China will quickly follow by improving and increasing its nuclear arsenal.*

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“an inflection point for research on nuclear strategy in China; it led to the integration of the community of experts on nuclear strategy across the Chinese government system: the PLA, defense industrial complex, the ministry of foreign affairs, and government-affiliated research institutes.”<sup>20</sup> This domestic participation and discourse eventually led to a conclusive nuclear strategy.

China’s official nuclear policy was finally revealed in a 2006 white paper. The primary theme of the document was that China would pursue a self-defensive nuclear strategy. The two principles that made up the strategy were “counterattack in self-defense and limited development of nuclear weapons” The white paper also noted that China sought to maintain a nuclear deterrent with a lean and effective nuclear force Then in 2008 another white paper stated that “China will never enter into an arms race with any other country.”<sup>21</sup> The PLA, however, still wants to “possess an arsenal large enough to

penetrate missile defense systems following a first strike on China.”<sup>22</sup> This means the technological capability of China’s nuclear arsenal is directly linked to the capabilities of American missile defense. As America develops new missile defense technologies, China will quickly follow by improving and increasing its nuclear arsenal.

The authors summarized their analysis of China’s nuclear program by stating, “the drivers of China’s future nuclear strategy have two main attributes: they are principally linked to advances in US military capabilities (as opposed to those of other nations) and to US strategic defenses and conventional strike capabilities. China’s credible second strike force is driven by the US military’s development of a trifecta of nonnuclear strategic capabilities: missile defenses, long-range conventional strike, and sophisticated command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets to locate and target China’s nuclear forces”<sup>23</sup> The Chinese military fears that “the United States could use its C4ISR assets to locate Chinese nuclear forces and destroy most of them with long-range conventional strikes. US missile defenses would then allow the United States to catch China’s ragged retaliation.”<sup>24</sup> The extrapolation of their conclusion is that if China cannot achieve technological parity with



the United States, it is possible Beijing may rethink its no-first-strike policy. This must factor into President Obama's calculations as he determines if advancing American missile defense is the best way to contain North Korea.

In response to missile defense specifically, the Chinese are researching and developing "a variety of technologies to defeat such systems, including maneuvering reentry vehicles (MaRVs), multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs), decoys, chaff, jamming, thermal shielding and ASAT weapons. If deployed, MaRV and MIRV warheads could affect China's strategic relationships with other nuclear powers by increasing the options available to China for using its nuclear weapons, including providing it with additional options against smaller nuclear powers such as India."<sup>25</sup> The next section will address China's strategic relationships in more depth.

The primary conclusion from Fravel and Medeiros' research is that American policy makers will be missing a valuable opportunity if they do not realize that Chinese leaders – for the time being – "believe that nuclear weapons are basically unusable on the battlefield and that once mutual deterrence is achieved, a larger arsenal or arms racing would be costly, counterproductive, and ultimately self-defeating. Likewise, China's leaders have never equated the size of their arsenal with China's national power. Instead, to be seen as powerful and to deter attacks against it, China needs only a small number of nuclear weapons."<sup>26</sup> Missile defense has the capability to destroy that philosophy and

force Chinese leaders into amassing a massive nuclear stockpile capable of penetrating America's defense system.

### Capability of American Missile Defense

According to the Missile Defense Agency's Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report, "the technologies now in hand will make it possible for the United States to build a global missile defense system that is so capable, flexible, and reliable, potential adversaries will see that they have no choice but to de-emphasize their efforts to use ballistic missiles as a way to obtain their political goals."<sup>27</sup> But according to Dr. George Lewis of Cornell University and Theodore Postol of MIT, "the actual state of missile defense technologies reveals that this new vision put forth by the report is nothing more than a fiction and that the policy strategy that follows from these technical myths could well lead to a foreign policy disaster."<sup>28</sup> When discussing missile defense it is important to remember the systems are far from perfect. Lewis and Postol's research shows just how imperfect American missile defense really is:

the Defense Department's own test data show that, in combat, the vast majority of 'successful' RIM-161

Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) experiments would have failed to destroy attacking warheads. The data also show potential adversaries how to defeat both the SM-3 and the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) systems, which share the same serious flaws that can be readily exploited by adversaries. The long record of tests of the GMD system, and the most recent test in January [2010], shows that it has only been tested in carefully orchestrated scenarios that have been designed to hide fundamental flaws and produce appearances of success. The report provides no material facts or allusions to facts that indicate any technical advances that would counter the long record of orchestrated and dumbed-down missile defense tests.<sup>29</sup>

Lewis and Postol highlight yet another crucial weakness in the current American missile defense system:

the forward-based X-band radars will have only a modest ability to discern differences in the radar signals from different objects deployed by ballistic missiles at the end of their powered flight. For that reason, these radars will not be able to guarantee that warheads will be confidently distinguished from pieces of debris or decoys. The radars will be able to observe at a range of thousands of kilometers the bodies of rockets that launch warheads, but the radars will have little or no capacity to track warheads deployed by these rockets at these ranges, as the shape and geometry of such warheads make them inherently stealthy relative to the missile bodies.<sup>30</sup>



SM-3 launch from deck of Aegis Cruiser (Raytheon)

Moreover, even in a best case scenario when the interceptor actually hits the missile, “experience shows that hitting parts of a missile’s airframe, even when the warhead is still attached to it, will not destroy the warhead or prevent it from continuing on a nearly unchanged trajectory toward its target.”<sup>31</sup> They also noted that “in eight or nine of the 10 SM-3 intercept tests from 2002 to 2009 involving these relatively slow closing speeds, the SM-3 kill vehicle failed to hit the warhead target directly. This means that, in real combat, the warhead would have not been destroyed but would have continued toward the target and detonated in eight or nine of the 10 SM-3 experimental tests. Yet, the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) has reported these 10 tests as “successful” without explaining that the test outcomes would not have resulted in true combat intercepts.”<sup>32</sup>

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*the negative effects of a costly and energetic US program that appears to Russian and Chinese leaders to be aimed at blunting their retaliatory nuclear strike forces will sow distrust of the United States within those governments...*

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Lewis and Postol go on to explain how some rogue states already have the ability to easily avoid American missile defense systems. They state that “by using simple explosive techniques to cut the one-stage rocket-target into multiple pieces, a potential adversary could substantially further increase the chances that an SM-3 or GMD interceptor would miss the warhead. Iran and North Korea successfully demonstrated this cutting technique when they separated the stages in the multistage

rockets they have already flown. The same could be done to the upper stage of a multistage rocket to counter the homing of the GMD kill vehicle, creating the same confusion of objects to conceal the true location of the warhead from the GMD system.”<sup>33</sup>

The software within American missile defense systems is also prone to failure. In the case of the Flight Test Ground-Based Interceptor 06 (FTG-06), “the spent solid-propellant upper rocket stage unexpectedly expelled chunks of rocket materials that created numerous unforeseen radar signals comparable to those expected from the warhead. The radar ‘scene data’ were passed to computers that were programmed to look for a scene that was expected. Because the scene was totally unexpected, the computer analysis failed completely, resulting in a failure to identify the warhead and possibly

even a failure to track the entire complex of targets properly.”<sup>34</sup>

The proposed ultimate goal of the Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report is for “the United States, with the support of allies and partners, to create an environment in which the acquisition, deployment, and use of ballistic missiles by regional adversaries can be deterred, principally by eliminating their confidence in the effectiveness of such attacks, and thereby devaluing their ballistic missile arsenals.”<sup>35</sup> Realis-

tically, Lewis and Postol expect the systems will “foster an environment of constant lobbying for more interceptors and more sensors to support them. How far this process will go is unknowable at this time, but the indicators of pressure toward uncontrolled and unjustified system growth already exist.”<sup>36</sup> Current trends based on the airborne laser, F-22, and F-35 indicate the development of advanced military technology is an incredibly expensive endeavor. It is not unimaginable that the United States could spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a new missile defense system, only to have it fail or be easily fooled by enemy countermeasures. Congressmen must resist the urge to support such systems because they are allured by the illusion of safety and high-paying jobs for constituents in their home districts.

Furthermore, “the United States could damage its relations with allies and friends by pushing on them false and unreliable solutions to real security problems. It will antagonize Russia and China, with massive defense deployments that have the appearance of being designed to be ‘flexibly’ adaptable to deal with Russian and Chinese strategic forces.”<sup>37</sup> The researchers believe the negative effects of a costly and energetic US program that appears to Russian and Chinese leaders to be aimed at blunting their retaliatory nuclear strike forces will sow distrust of the United States within those governments, resulting in significant barriers to future arms control deals with Russia, let alone China. This has already been seen in recent US-Russian discussions over the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, “the new missile defense architecture will produce serious doubts about the reliability of small nuclear forces for deterrence. These doubts are unjustified by detailed technical analysis of the true capabilities of these systems, but they will occur and could produce impenetrable new barriers to further nuclear arms reductions. None of these unwanted outcomes need to be a result of the current Obama plan, but without a judicious and careful national assessment of the capabilities and limitations of these ballistic missile defense systems, the pressure to expand them will be both tremendous and without rationale. This new missile defense program could then lead to the usual results: gigantically expensive systems that have little real capability but create uncertainties that cause other states to react in ways that are not in the security interest of the United States.”<sup>39</sup>

Congressmen Rogers and his colleagues should realize that exorbitantly expensive missile defense systems must actually work if they are to have a chance of imbuing the nation with the strength of Reagan. But while Congress tries to live in the past, geopolitics are in full swing in South Asia.

### Disturbing Strategic Triangles

Over the last several decades, “two triangles have become strategically relevant. Within the region, the triangle between India, Pakistan, and China is decisive; while in the transregional power balance, the triangle between the United States, China, and India is more relevant.”<sup>40</sup> The United States must realize that by aggravating China, it is also indirectly aggravating India

and Pakistan. At the moment, Beijing and New Delhi are “more concerned with minimum security than with maximum power, but their behavior/policy affects each other’s perceptions and policy responses. This provides an opportunity for dealing with the consequences of a security dilemma where one state’s pursuit of security leads to security concerns for others.”<sup>41</sup> Consequently, “left to its own devices, the weight of a security dilemma could drive China and India into an economically costly, geopolitically destabilizing, and militarily risky arms competition.”<sup>42</sup>

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In engineering terminology, this is called saturating a controller. Each time the United States ratchets up its missile defense, it is forcing China to advance its offensive missile technology. Assuming this happens slowly and over a long period of time, the regional strategic triangle will return to a stable equilibrium. But if the advances occur too quickly or in large enough increments, the “spin rate” of China’s nuclear development will exceed the tolerance of its regional neighbors and the system will collapse. Likewise, it is also difficult to dump momentum

from a controller without damaging the system or causing it to become unstable. In the geopolitical context, this means it will be extremely difficult to have China give up any of its offensive technology once it has been developed even though losing the technology may be in the best interests of regional stability.

Responses to American missile defense in China and South Asia are incredibly diverse. “Taipei views missile defense deployments as an opportunity to reconnect with the US military establishment and as a symbolic counter to China’s missile build-up. Beijing is the most vocal opponent of ballistic missile defenses and, unlike Moscow, has the capacity to increase its nuclear capabilities in reaction to US programs. New Delhi does not oppose US missile defense plans, hoping to solidify military and diplomatic ties to Washington. Privately, however, Indian officials worry about the wisdom of Washington’s moves and Beijing’s likely reactions to them, including renewed missile or nuclear assistance to Pakistan. Islamabad is plainly concerned about military technology transfers between India and the United States, and has lined up with China in opposition to ballistic missile defenses.”<sup>43</sup> Krepon’s analysis further proves the point that America’s missile defense decisions do not occur in a vacuum. As Hazlitt said, assessing the impact of missile defense relies on tracing the consequences of that policy not merely for one group but for all groups.

Other researchers confirm this perspective by finding that “the arms race in South Asia is driven



essentially by technological progress, with innovation passing sequentially from the United States to China, from China to India, and from India to Pakistan.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, a technological standoff between America and China will eventually trickle down to the rest of the countries in the region. So unless the United States is prepared to launch the region into a positive feedback loop of new offensive capabilities feeding upon new defensive systems, it should abandon the goal of stabilizing the region with new interceptors in Alaska and California.

## Conclusion

The United States has been working on missile defense for six decades now, and seriously working to perfect that capability for 20-plus years. Yet there are still the same questions about its effect on arms control, and unease at its cost and reliability already evident in the early years.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, “the total cost for creating, testing, operating, and maintaining the program could range from \$238 billion to \$1.2 trillion.”<sup>46</sup> By that logic, the United States has spent a fortune developing a weapon it has not fully mastered, which according to this author, is money could have been spent on more critical American needs. When the US first developed the atomic bomb, another expensive weapon that we did not fully comprehend, it was arguably a matter of national survival, and certainly a wartime necessity. That is not the case with missile defense in the Pacific. There are still other strategies on the table – such as continued economic sanctions or political pressure waged in concert with the Chinese – that can be used to

ease Kim Jong Un’s finger off of the nuclear trigger.

With all those considerations in mind, both Mao and Hazlitt would likely agree that the Asia-Pacific region is an unbelievably complex geopolitical environment. Thus, there is certainly no reason for an interloper to be feeding the paper tigers.

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# Lessons from the Khobar Towers

## A Case Study of American Casualty Aversion

RYNE DAVID HANSON

The United States possesses the greatest conventional military capabilities that the world has ever seen. Over time, the United States military has developed the capability to impose its will on any region of the world with relatively limited risk to its members. In the wars that America has fought in the dozen years between Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, combat casualties were minute in comparison to earlier wars, especially given the significant accomplishments of the armed forces. The United States pushed Iraq's military, arguably one of the most capable in the Middle East, out of Kuwait in a little over a month in early 1991 and then defeated it again in six weeks in 2003. In addition, America led a number of operations throughout the 1990s, all of which resulted in victory at relatively little loss of human life.

These examples show how skilled the United States is at winning conventional wars, but in the post-conventional Iraq and Afghanistan War environments, America's ability to protect its forces and accomplish its objectives has eroded. Casualties have been in the thousands rather than the tens or hundreds, and wars that were supposed to last less than



Outside Khobar Towers prior to attack (DefenseImagery.mil)

a year have persisted for a decade. The major difference lies not in the competence of the military, but in the nature of the conflict. The American people have come to expect that the armed forces will win wars easily with few losses, and the American government has struggled to develop policies that meet that expectation. But mission accomplishment obviously must also be a priority. Given strong emphasis placed on force protection in the contemporary security environment, the question must be asked: has the Department of Defense (DOD) identified the optimum practices for promoting both mission accomplishment and force protection in the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment?

The end of the Cold War also showed the world that there was no conventional power that could stand up to the United States in a head-to-head fight. This led to an increase in insurgent and terrorist practices aimed at the United States and to a number of unconventional attacks on Americans. One significant attack was the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in June of 1996. The attack left nineteen service members dead and hundreds more wounded.<sup>1</sup> An incident that took a matter of minutes set a number of events in motion

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Second Lieutenant RYNE DAVID HANSON is a Class of 2013 Military and Strategic Studies major.

that, in the space of one year, led to the end of a general officer's career and helped to set a precedent that arguably has affected the decision-making of many subsequent commanders, especially those conducting operations in COIN environments.

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The attack on the Khobar Towers is only one incident that has led the United States to move away from more aggressive engagement practices and to embrace a force protection mindset. The trend had started before the attack and has persisted after it, even down to the present. As the post-Cold War United States became more invincible in the eyes of its citizens, allies, and enemies abroad, any casualty on the American side was seen as a mission failure. As Joseph Stalin supposedly said, "The death of one man is a tragedy; the death of millions is a statistic."<sup>2</sup> In some ways, there exists a strange conundrum wherein the fewer casualties America has in a war, the worse the war is made out to be. In order to minimize the risk of losing a soldier, airman, sailor, or marine, the Department of Defense has made force protection a high priority in COIN environments. However, there are specialists such as Jeffrey Record, strategy professor at the Air War College, who believe that this emphasis has become excessive.<sup>3</sup> Major Charles

Hyde agrees and claims the United States has a severe case of casualty aversion, and that it has gotten to the point that it is making the American fighting force weaker than it has been in the past.<sup>4</sup> There is no reason to claim that protecting armed service members deployed in COIN environments is a bad thing, but if guarding military members hinders their ability to complete their mission, it is possible that wars will last longer and cost more, in treasure and in human life.

It stands to reason that there is a significant relationship between force protection and mission effectiveness in the military. This is especially true in a COIN environment. If soldiers remain confined to their forward operating base (FOB) for the duration of a deployment, they will not be able to engage with the population whose support they are trying to win. Furthermore, the longer a mission lasts, the more opportunities there are for enemies to plan and execute an attack. Ultimately, the more casualty averse a commander, the more likely the enemy can identify his vulnerabilities and launch a successful strike.

If soldiers are expected to go outside the wire with no armor or weapons on the other hand, they will be vulnerable to attack and the objective may be lost. In a conventional war where militaries meet head to head on an open field, this may not be as important because those battles are about the mass of the armies and the strategy of the commanders as well as the ability to protect forces. In COIN, soldiers must be protected because an attack can come at anytime from anywhere. If soldiers are unprotected, they will be gunned down

or blown up at every turn.

Accordingly there is a continuum that must be balanced in order for military operations to be successful. Working on either extreme will put not only the mission at risk, but will endanger the lives of the soldiers in the field as well. It is ultimately up to commanders to find the balance between force protection and mission effectiveness in order to limit the negative effects of casualty aversion and reckless endangerment, respectfully.

Additionally, many commanders are afraid of being the scapegoat when something happens to members of their units. The Khobar Tower attack showed that it is more important to find someone to blame, in some cases, than it is to identify the true problems and work to find meaningful answers to the tough questions. Of even more concern, the precedent that was set by the investigation of the Khobar Towers may bring about a future military that works harder to protect the careers of its members than the security of the American people.

This essay argues that the DOD has not optimized the practice of promoting both force protection and mission effectiveness in a COIN environment, and in order to do so, they must look at the relationship between the two in a new way. The United States has spent the past decade trying to provide maximum protection to its all-volunteer force while also accomplishing its objectives. There are two distinct approaches to meeting these challenges. The first has been implemented and involves protecting the troops so well that casual-



ties are kept to a minimum. The other option, which has not been used, would be to send troops out into danger all the time, hoping that they accomplish their mission and, if they fail, to replace them and try again. This method is more of the “take-that-hill-at-any-cost” approach that was practiced in the major conventional wars of the twentieth century.

A problem with focusing excessively on force protection is that it subordinates the primary reason for military force, to accomplish an objective for the nation, to the hope that no friendly casualties will be sustained. If taken too far, force protection becomes casualty aversion. While the short term benefits of this strategy are valuable, handcuffing the military and keeping the forces from taking risks ironically serves to hurt them in the long run. As forces spend more time in an area, the enemy has more chances to attack. In a deployed COIN environment, the longer a group of military members stay in one place, the more vulnerable they are, no matter what defenses are in place. Additionally, commanders working under this model could be afraid to take risks because they do not want to be held accountable for any losses. Because of the events that took place after the attack on the Khobar Towers, this feeling is especially strong among senior military commanders such as former Chief of Staff General Ronald Fogleman.<sup>5</sup>

If the DOD moves to the other side of the spectrum and decides to focus on the mission only, then forces are again placed at excessive risk. Very few military operations are able to be completed in less than a day, so forces will always

have to dig in somewhere and hole up. If no base defenses are set up, then the mission may be lost once again because military members have nowhere to defend themselves or to plan their next move. The key to success under these conditions is not to exclusively favor either the force protection end of the spectrum or the other extreme that takes a totally mission-centric focus. Thus, the best solution is to synthesize the two markedly different approaches in such a way that each is employed to complement the other.



Khobar after the blast (Getty Images)

In the COIN environment, force protection and the accomplishment of a mission should not be separate goals. Any victory in one does not preclude a victory in the other. Due to the nature of asymmetric warfare, where COIN is the primary strategy of the conventionally stronger side, if the forces in the area are safer, it is generally because the insurgency in that area has been weakened. On the other hand, if the COIN fighters are successful in suppressing insurgents within a given area, their forces will perforce be safer. In short, enshrining force protection as something separate and distinct from the mission is not the optimal solution for success in a COIN environment

## The Khobar Towers Attack – Before, During, and After

Late at night on the 25th of June 1996, a truck exploded near the Khobar Tower personnel housing facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The blast was much larger than the housing complex was designed to handle, with estimates of the bomb's explosive power rating ranging anywhere from 3,000 to 30,000 pounds of TNT. In the blast, nineteen American military members were killed, hundreds were injured, and many Saudis and other third country nationals were either injured or killed. Windows were shattered throughout the entire compound, the explosion created a crater eighty-five feet wide and thirty-five feet deep, and the blast could be felt even twenty miles away.<sup>6</sup>

The events leading up to the attack, those that took place during the attack, and the decisions that were made after the attack have been investigated multiple times and documented in many ways. Prior to the bombing a number of investigations focused on the security of the Khobar Towers and proposed a number of recommendations to increase force protection in the complex. These vulnerability assessments were ordered in response to an attack almost one year earlier in Riyadh on the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabia National Guard, (OPM-SANG). The assessment concluded the most likely threats to the complex would come from an explosion on the perimeter or a vehicle bomb that penetrated the security fences.<sup>7</sup>

In all, thirty-nine recommendations were made in the 8 January

1996 vulnerability assessment conducted by the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Included among the recommendations were cutting back shrubbery around the perimeter, adding reinforced concrete to the existing barrier, and taking steps to deny enemies the ability to penetrate the installation. Of the thirty-nine recommendations, all but three were implemented. The three exceptions involved the installation of Mylar on the windows of at-risk buildings, distribution of mission essential personnel about the entire complex, and the installation of fire alarms within the towers.<sup>8</sup>

During the attack, the only emergency message that was received by the residents of the complex came by word-of-mouth from three rooftop sentries who saw the explosive-laden truck approaching. As soon as they identified the threat, they called it in to Central Security Control and ran through the hallways knocking on doors. Before the bomb went off, however, only the top three floors of the eight story dormitory had been alerted. Those residing on the bottom five floors were, for the most part, still in their rooms when the truck exploded. While the sentries were knocking on doors, Central Security Control was working on gaining approval from the base commander to use the base "Giant Voice" system so that the rest of the base could be warned.<sup>9</sup> The system was never activated by the Wing Operations Center because the bomb went off before approval was obtained.

In the months following the attack, both the DOD and Air Force provided reports describing that event and recommendations

for corrective action. The DOD report, an expedited review written by retired Army General Wayne Downing only a month after the attack, concluded that Brigadier General Terryl "Terry" Schwalier, the commander of the installation at the time of the attack, did not take sufficient measures to protect those living within the complex. The Air Force report, on the other hand, concluded that General Schwalier was a responsible leader who had made prudent decisions regarding force protection in the Khobar Towers housing complex. Due to the conflicting conclusions of the two reports, Deputy Secretary of Defense John White ordered a third investigation of the incident. The third report, written by Air Force Inspector General Richard Swope and Judge Advocate General Bryan Hawley, upheld the recommendation of the Air Force investigation and concluded that sanction of senior the leadership at the Khobar Towers was not warranted.<sup>10</sup>

Though two separate Air Force investigations had recommended no sanction of General Schwalier, Secretary of Defense William Cohen subsequently concluded the Air Force had placed insufficient emphasis on leadership accountability. In his July 1997 report, released over a year after the attack, Secretary Cohen stated, "In my view, the Air Force reports do not reflect a thorough critical analysis of all of the facts and issues, nor, in many instances, do they arrive at conclusions fully supported by the facts."<sup>11</sup> His analysis went on to weigh individual decisions that were made during the period leading up to the attack and included his personal per-

spective on what actions should have been taken during that time. By the end of his assessment, Secretary Cohen made clear his belief that General Schwalier was responsible for the outcome of the attack on the Khobar Towers, and should therefore be held accountable for the mistakes he had made. Although punitive action under Uniform Code of Military Justice sentence was never threatened, Cohen did call for administrative reprimand.<sup>12</sup> General Schwalier, had been approved by Congress for promotion to Major General, but the Air Force was asked to delay his promotion until the final investigation had been completed. Schwalier subsequently was permanently removed from the promotion list after Secretary Cohen issued his final report.

### **The Relationship between Force Protection and Mission Effectiveness**

The decisions made in the aftermath of the Khobar Towers attack have been evaluated by a number of sources since General Schwalier's promotion was denied. One of those sources expressed fear that the precedent set by Secretary Cohen in the Schwalier controversy could influence decisions made by future commanders.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, there is the issue of casualty aversion. Casualty aversion includes the fear that as the number of soldiers, sailors, and airmen lost in a conflict goes up, the possibility of losing the support of civilian policymakers, the American people, or senior military leaders increases as well, to the point where a person who is otherwise a good leader will be punished for failing to protect those under his or her command. According to

Michael Dunn, former president of the Air Force Association, “The message seems to be that reasonable attention to security (or any other area of responsibility) is not enough; a commander becomes

the military who directed the QDR believed that risk was no longer acceptable and that innovation needed to take a back seat to the status quo.

tary would be open to any terrorist attack, and the mission would be a failure anyway. According to Ronald Rokosz and Charles Hash, “The potential for terrorists to inflict high casualties has increased with advanced technology and larger bombs and the availability of weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological agents.”<sup>17</sup> Now that terrorists have increased their capability to inflict casualties on uniformed military members, force protection is more important. This is true in all places where military members live, whether it is on a deployment or on a military installation on the home front.

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*casualty aversion could cause commanders to act in a way that is best for personal career prospects, rather than in a way that is best for the security of the nation.*

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punishable if he leaves anything – anything at all – undone, even when discovered with 20/20 hindsight....It will also tend to put your commanders in a self-defensive mode, and that is not what you would want.”<sup>14</sup> Dunn’s belief is that casualty aversion could cause commanders to act in a way that is best for personal career prospects, rather than in a way that is best for the security of the nation.

In an interview with General Ronald R. Fogleman, who was the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time of the Khobar Towers attack, Dr. Richard Kohn asked why General Fogleman sought early retirement while serving as Chief of Staff. Fogleman responded by citing many reasons, but one of the more important was that he felt he was no longer in step with the rest of the American military leadership. He felt other leaders believed risk-taking was no longer acceptable, an idea that seems contrary to the essence of war fighting. When Fogleman was told the Joint Chiefs of Staff “don’t need any Billy Mitchells,” he lost faith in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), a summit occurring at the beginning of each presidency to review the military’s national security policy, defense strategy, and force structure.<sup>15</sup> Essentially, the members of

The opposite side of the coin from casualty aversion, with its excessive emphasis on force protection, is an excessively single-minded focus on mission accomplishment at all costs. These two demands, which often compete for a military leader’s time, money, and attention, often are thought of as opposite ends of a spectrum, where additional emphasis on one generally requires a proportionally diminished emphasis on the other. This can be seen in the events leading up to the Khobar Towers attack. One of the recommendations in the OSI’s original vulnerability assessment was to disperse mission essential personnel throughout the complex.<sup>16</sup> General Schwalier elected not to take that step because he believed that dispersing mission critical elements that needed to communicate quickly with each other would have had a negative impact on the mission. In order to maintain the ability of his people to do their jobs, General Schwalier sacrificed some of the protection that separating the mission elements might have provided.

Of course, it would not be wise for a commander to ignore the matter of force protection entirely. Without appropriate force protection, the United States mili-

In the counterinsurgency (COIN) environment, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy telling commanders how much they should focus on protecting his people or on pursuing his mission. Different circumstances require different emphasis, which is why the military gives its commanders the latitude to make decisions in the first place.<sup>18</sup> America’s enemies have tried to exploit the opposing viewpoints of those believing in force protection and those believing that mission success is more important than any one soldier’s life. In a word, they have tried to convert the United States into what Air Force Major Charles Hyde calls a “sawdust superpower.” Hyde claims, “The perception among our enemies and allies alike is that the American public is unwilling to commit to any military operation in which one can expect even a minimal number of casualties.”<sup>19</sup> This perception has been promoted by events like the Khobar Towers attack, where a relatively small number of lives were lost,



and the United States responded by destroying the career of the expeditionary force commander and quickly pulling its troops out of the area due to the loss of public support.

Most rational people would not ignore force protection in its entirety or, conversely, claim the only way to ensure public support and victory in a COIN environment depends on keeping all soldiers safe from harm. Most would argue that a balance needs to be struck between the two. According to a report submitted by the Defense Science Board (DSB) to the Undersecretary of Defense in 2006, "...there is both tension and synergy between these responsibilities. Force protection is crucial to the creation of circumstances that facilitate military forces executing their operational missions. It may well be...that exposing both combat and supporting forces to greater risk will result in rapid achievement of the mission."<sup>20</sup> In other words, there is a give and take between force protection and mission effectiveness, and the proper balance of the two depends on the situation. However, a commander should never work from one end of the spectrum entirely. There is rarely a time when a commander needs to send troops into a battlefield without body armor, just as there is no possibility of completing a mission if all of the troops are locked down in a bunker.

### **Impact of Force Protection on Future Commanders and Policy Makers**

Force protection is not something that has suddenly appeared just since the attack on the Khobar Towers, and it is unlikely that the

need of reasonable force protection will be ignored in the future. Future commanders will be challenged by their responsibility to protect their forces while also having to accomplish missions in environments that continue to grow more complex and dangerous. In addition to the enemy, future commanders and policy makers will have to deal with the American public. As the nation grows more and more weary of war, more decisions may be influenced by casualty aversion, a phobia that supposedly already is embedded in American's attitudes towards war.<sup>21</sup> There are, however, some who contend that the impact of American military casualties on home front attitudes is more complicated than it first appears.

In fact, the public does not have an aversion to casualties so much as it fears the idea of sacrifices being made for no reason.<sup>22</sup> Each time the military is used, be it to meet a direct national security threat or to stop genocide half-way around the world, Americans perform what amounts to a cost-benefit analysis. If important national interests are at stake, the public seems willing to accept high losses in military operations. This can be seen from the high public approval ratings of US involvement in World War II when we lost 291,557 soldiers compared to the relatively low approval ratings when we lost 18 troops in Somalia in 1996.<sup>23</sup> The most important thing for policy makers to consider when deciding whether or not to use military force is to calculate the costs and benefits of using military force for significant US interests. If the situation poses no significant threat to the United States, the public prob-

ably will not accept any appreciable number of friendly casualties.

Another problem with deciding to use military force when there are not significant national security threats is that force protection will take focus off of the mission. While some level of casualty aversion is natural and no commander should want to send men to die, an excessive aversion to casualties is unhealthy for a military organization and conflicts with the Clausewitzian assertion that war is politics by other means.<sup>24</sup> For commanders, casualty aversion means that meeting a political objective is not what is most important, as Clausewitz claims; rather it is the minimizing of losses. General Wesley Clark, former supreme allied commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), once said, "In an air campaign you don't want to lose aircraft because when you start to lose these expensive machines the countdown starts against you."<sup>25</sup> This is an example of a commander making force protection the priority in a conflict. When this becomes the norm, it is possible that this feeling will be the primary factor in all decisions of whether or not to use force.<sup>26</sup> Though this may be acceptable when significant national interests are not at stake, commanders need to ensure that the political objectives of war are the primary focus in conflicts where success or failure has a major impact on the nation.

The final factor which may influence future commanders' decisions in conflicts may be the fear of unfairly being held accountable for their mistakes. The condemnation of Schwalier after the attack in Saudi Arabia set the precedent

that someone must be at fault for every breach in security leading to American casualties.<sup>27</sup> Punishing a senior leader for a single attack on a complex impacts not only are future commanders, but also those in lower military positions. According to Matt Labash, writer for *The Weekly Standard*, “Field commanders have been put on notice that their political superiors are not to be trusted in a crisis.” Even though General Schwalier maintained an impeccable service record, including a flawless performance in enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq, his career was effectively terminated so that Secretary of Defense Cohen could tell Congress he had found and punished the negligent party in the Khobar Towers affair.<sup>28</sup> If this is the way that senior military commanders are to be held accountable following a single attack, many of them may act in a way that protects their career rather than the American people.

### **Creating a Synthesis of Force Protection and Mission Effectiveness**

Common sense should tell people that the military cannot make a fetish of force protection or wastefully expend its human resources on a single objective without thinking of their security. However, the proper balance of force protection and risk-taking varies based on the situation. Charles Dunlap, the former deputy judge advocate general of the United States Air Force, claims, “...there is no checklist or sequence of pre-planned steps applicable to every permutation of this kind of antagonist.”<sup>29</sup> This is because wars of the future will be “neo-absolutist” in nature, meaning America’s

enemies will not follow the rules of conventional war. Depending on the situation, enemy, and consequences, different levels of force protection may be necessary to accomplish a military objective.

While some level of force protection is always necessary, its importance should never outweigh that of the mission. Casualty aversion can be healthy, and even desirable in the armed forces, but it should replace the military’s self-sacrificing ethos. If it is possible to achieve an objective without losing a soldier, there is no reason not to choose that option. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Even with the increased capability of military technology and equipment, risks must be taken. That is why it is the duty of the military to assume those risks on behalf of the society it serves.<sup>30</sup> To do otherwise would undermine the very essence and purpose of a professional military organization.

On a more tactical level in the COIN environment, the military should focus on an aggressive strategy for force protection. Rather than “hunkering down” behind barriers and vehicles, the military should focus on immediate and constant interaction with the local population to prevent the enemy from increasing their sway over that target population.<sup>31</sup> By taking this offensive approach, not only does the military accomplish the most basic COIN objective of winning hearts and minds, it also protects the forces by securing the local population and flushing out an insurgency before it can grow and spread.

This is the basis for a new proposal concerning the mission focus

spectrum. Rather than separating force protection from mission effectiveness into a give-and-take relationship, the strategy in a COIN environment should be to make force protection and mission effectiveness a win-win relationship. Just as the DOD considers a secure population tantamount to a victory in COIN, it should similarly consider a secure military force in the area to be a victory for mission effectiveness. On the other hand, one of the measurable outcomes for every mission should be the safety of the soldiers. But success of this outcome should not be attained by building impenetrable bunkers. Instead, it should be measured by eradicating the threat. Viewing this strategy in the long term, rather than by overreacting to only the short term losses, insurgencies will be wiped out more aggressively, and populations will be secured in a more timely fashion. Conclusion

This essay has analyzed the relationship between force protection and mission effectiveness by examining a particular case which magnified the extreme ends of the mission focus spectrum. After the attack on the Khobar Towers, the Secretary of Defense’s decision made his concern about the need for force protection clear. It was the contention here that, in the COIN environment, balancing the mission focus spectrum is essential to successfully carrying out orders.

While force protection is important, it can be detrimental to an operation if it devolves into an unhealthy obsession with casualty aversion. When the mission of protecting one’s unit outweighs the objective the American people rely on their military leaders to accom-

plish, then the reason for maintaining a professional military force becomes moot. As long as risk-free alternatives to solving a problem exist, they should be taken. But military commanders who are unwilling to take any risk at all may jeopardize the very people, they are supposed to protect, both the members of their unit and their fellow citizens on the home front.

The best way to balance force protection and mission effectiveness is not to separate them into separate entities as they have been in the past. A win-win relationship between the two desired outcomes will be more beneficial to military operations in COIN environments in the future because a safer force is inherent in a successful COIN operation. As military forces secure a population, they are accomplishing their mission while also ensuring benefits of greater security to themselves. In order to do this, an aggressive mindset must be adopted. Maintaining a constant presence “outside the wire” may initially put units at risk and this will be very uncomfortable for commanders, but once a military force secures and wins the support of a local population, risks for deployed forces will decrease, and future COIN conflicts may be resolved more quickly as a result.

## Future Research

This essay proposes a solution to balancing the mission focus spectrum based on the past capabilities of the United States military. As new technologies come into play, unconventional wars may change entirely. Questions that could be examined by future researchers could focus on the types of war that America fights. Is

the United States going to remain the principal actor in combating turbulence and terrorism across the globe? Or will it become more selective about its military engagements? If so, where will that more selective focus be placed? No less important, technological revolutions could change the nature of the battlefield in COIN environments very soon. Will there be a significant technological leap that will change the nature of force protection? Will soldiers even need to be present on a battlefield in the future? These questions need to be considered in order to continue to adapt the way the United States fights wars of any kind, not just COIN. The United States military has always been known for its superiority in maneuver warfare, but it has not been very effective in meeting the challenges of unconventional struggles. In order to maintain its position as the world’s most powerful nation, the United States must adapt. After all, its enemies certainly are doing so, and when considering the idea of pivoting our national security focus towards Asia, we’ve greatly increased the challenge of getting ‘maneuver’ forces to the conflict, and thus, a new kind of warfare must be organized and implemented.

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# Turkey's Civil-Military Dilemma and EU Ascension

DANIEL BIEBER

For over 150 years, the Turkish and Ottoman governments of Asia Minor have sought acceptance into the club of European States. For the past few decades, Turkey has attempted to gain membership in the European Union to achieve this status. The nation has wrestled with many challenges to realize this aim, including economic struggles, strong relations with the Middle East, Kurdish unrest, and a prevalent Islamist sentiment that is contrary to European characteristics. The most profound obstacle between Turkey and EU membership, however, is its peculiar civil-military structure. Since the implementation of secular democracy at the hands of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1930's, Turkey's military establishment has become the enforcer of secularism against a resurgent Islamic sentiment in the nation's democratic processes. While a secular government is characteristic of European nations, the European Union has stressed that Turkey must tame its military from infringing on democracy before the conversation for membership can seriously begin. The challenges Turkey's government faces – currently led by its prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – are very complex. The military sector's influence in Turkish politics is

the result of foundational cultural and nationalist ideology engrained in Turkish society since the establishment of the republic in 1923. At the same time, Islamism is equally engrained in the nation with a vast Muslim majority. If Turkey wishes to gain the status of a European state, it must deal with the military's obstruction of its democracy, while tempering the deeply-rooted Islamic sentiment that continually influences parliamentary procedures.



**Current Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan (Time)**

At the conclusion of Turkey's four-year War of Independence in 1923 and with the founding of the new republic, the nation's founding fathers were confronted with the challenge of creating a national identity that favored a modernized democracy. To take on this enormous task, the new leaders resorted to temporary authoritarian measures to create a climate

that would dismiss political Islam.<sup>1</sup> These leaders found a unifying symbol in Kemal Atatürk, who became the first president of the new democratic nation. The ruling class used Atatürk and his policies to bring the nation together in a purely secular light. Still, the founders' view of democracy was not identical to that of the West. They favored rather a "rational democracy" that viewed democratic processes as an intelligent debate among educated leadership, rather than popular vote.<sup>2</sup> This view was the first sign of later political friction between what would become a minority elite and larger democratic appeal.

While Atatürk's image was heavily advertised to embody the new nation, the government took every measure to rid Turkey of Islamic culture. Yusef Akçura, one of Turkey's first nationalists, classified the revolution as Turkism, a movement that rejects two prior conjoining movements of Ottomanism and Islamism, movements which, as he stated, "created tension, hatred, and rebellion against Turkey."<sup>3</sup> The new government abolished the Islamic law of the Ottoman Empire and

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**Cadet DANIEL BIEBER is a Scholar and Class of 2013 Humanities major.**



One of many Turkish propaganda images of Mustafa Kemal, better known as Attatürk, founding father of modern Turkey (mysubh.com)

established a secular code of law.<sup>4</sup> The parliament – comprised solely of the semi-authoritarian Republican People's Party (CHP) – enacted that Attatürk be represented in all public establishments while photographers constantly took carefully choreographed pictures of him. These pictures showed him performing very Western activities; such as wearing Western clothes, playing golf, drinking alcohol, and socializing with women.<sup>5</sup> The CHP went to great lengths to separate religion from the image of the government, and in doing so they created an atmosphere that shunned expressions of faith in both policy making and public life. In the place of religion the Western, democratic elite of the time established Kemalism, a secularist ideology that “forms the basis for the priorities and values of Turkish Public life.”<sup>6</sup>

It was in this context that the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) became guardians of the nation's secular government. The military's influence on Turkish governmental operations dated back to the

thirteenth century, when the military played a key role in establishing the Ottoman Empire.<sup>7</sup> During the single-party rule of the CHP from 1923 to 1950, the military was technically subordinate to the government but it was “nevertheless considered the ultimate guarantee of the secular republic.”<sup>8</sup> Founding government officials emphasized the idea as soon as the national security establishment – led by the National Security Council or MGK – was formulated in 1926. The CHP deputy prime minister of the period, Turhan Feyzioğlu, stated that “national security policy . . . cannot focus exclusively on military policy. The council also deals with issues such as health, trade, education, industry, agriculture, transportation, and public work policies.”<sup>9</sup> Here one can see the articulation of what was commonly held as the military's just sphere of influence by the founders of the republic.

As Turkish politics developed and challenging parties formed, the CHP moved from the central party to the periphery as right,

left, Islamist and nationalist parties gained prominence. After Atatürk's death in 1938, the government and military continued to closely monitor the state's Islamic climate as Muslim chaplains returned to the military, Islamic classes were reintroduced to state schools, and Arabic calls to prayer were reinstated.<sup>10</sup> The first coup of the new republic, staged in 1960, was a “response to the abuses of power by a parliamentary majority” that “introduced a multiparty system, a strong executive, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, civil rights and liberties, a free press, and other standard features of advanced democracy.”<sup>11</sup> In this case the military acted as a liberating force that used its power to strengthen the republican establishment. The rule of the military lasted only 17 months, after which power was handed back to a reformed democratic government. A second coup, staged in March 1971, was another instance where the military clearly acted in the interest of the nation's security. A vast array of active parties from Islamists to socialists created a climate of great social and economic unrest. The government of then-prime minister Süleyman Demirel found it impossible to maintain public order.<sup>12</sup> Numerous militant and terrorist groups were active in the country, and the kidnapping of four United States airmen by leftist guerillas in early March was the last straw for the military. The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces accused the Demirel government of “driving our country into anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest.”<sup>13</sup> The military suspended parliament and created an “above party” government that



kept Turkey under martial law for two and one-half years. During this time the military apprehended and tried over 4,000 suspected terrorists. In October of 1973 the military allowed elections to be held, in which a weak coalition government was put in power.<sup>14</sup> With these elections the military actually sacrificed peace and stability for the sake of democracy. In 1973 and onward Turkey would suffer through an economic crisis, oil crisis, and renewed terrorist activity.<sup>15</sup> The turbulent latter half of the 1970s would cause the military to step in again, however, in 1980.

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As the country's politics turned away from secularism by virtue of democratic processes, the military transformed from a liberating, modernized body to a group suspicious of government dealings and pessimistic about the voting power of the public. The 1980 military intervention, according to Cizre, did the reverse of the coup in 1960. In response to partisan tension, the military pushed the state to "draconian actions when it confronted what [the military] defined as threats to secular security – whether communist, Islamist, Kurdish, or an overbearing parliament."<sup>16</sup> From the 1980 coup through the 1990s the military transformed into an institu-

tion that viewed the nation around it with disapproval, one with a political system that veered away from the foundational principles of a modern, secular, and developed Turkey. What it viewed as backwards was the pervasive Islamist sentiment, not only in the political arena but in everyday life.<sup>17</sup> With the return of Islam to common culture, the security sector and secular elite found themselves polarized from Turkish politics as the nation seemingly spun away from its Kemalist foundations.

The secularists were losing popular support, but they did not lose their power. In all of these actions including the 1971 and 1980 coups, the TAF has a legal basis for its position in relation to the government to determine political proceedings. Article 35 of the Internal Service Act of the Turkish Armed Forces, passed after the 1960 coup, states that "the military is responsible for defending both the Turkish Fatherland and the Turkish republic as defined by the Constitution."<sup>18</sup> Each constitution since the formation of the republic in 1923 has stressed the secularism of the state, citing Kemalism as the guiding set of principles for democratic procedures. Further, Article 85 of the Internal Service Regulation states that the "Turkish Armed Forces shall defend the country against the internal as well as the external threats, if necessary by force."<sup>19</sup> For each of the three coups, the military has invoked the use of these laws to take control of the government, purporting that it has in each case been acting to protect and supervise secular state proceedings.<sup>20</sup> The European Union's periodical Progress Report on

Turkey continually states that the constitution and subsequent laws provide Turkey's National Security Council with "a broad definition of national security, which – depending on interpretation – could cover almost any policy field."<sup>21</sup> Despite nearly a century of supposed progress toward democracy, observers can still see the broad, undefined power granted to the military reminiscent of Feyzioğlu's remarks in 1926. Based on interpretation that power can vary widely, and thus the actions of the military – while undemocratic – have been largely within the constitution.

It is this formulation of government that has thus far kept Turkey out of the European Union. The special status of the TAF is "one of the most significant obstacles for Turkey" to align with the EU's political criteria. After the "post-modern coup" of 1997, where indirect pressure from the military resulted in the dismissal of the Islamist Workers Party from power, the TAF has expressed an unwillingness to intervene in politics.<sup>22</sup> Since then, the unilateral election of the religiously oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power, led by the now-prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has enabled the government to pass multiple pro-democratic reforms. The National Assembly passed 34 sweeping amendments to the Constitution in October 2001, showing the government's willingness to conform to the requirements of EU membership.<sup>23</sup> Three laws in 2003 and 2004 further diminished the TAF's influence on politics. The Law Concerning the Amendment of Laws No. 4963 increased the number of civilian members in the Council of Ministers, and abol-

ished TAF membership in Council of Higher Education and Higher Council of Radio. The next two laws, the Public Financial Administration and Control Law and the Eight Harmonization Package established parliamentary oversight of the military's budget and property, respectively.<sup>24</sup> In addition the National Security Council,

elitist class. What these reforms accomplish is a peacetime prioritization of democracy while minimizing if not altogether removing military influence. If these trends continue to Turkish government will "have more civilians than soldiers," something it has lacked in the past.<sup>28</sup> The victory of this referendum in public vote is yet another

parliamentary seats his party cannot ratify the new constitution alone.<sup>31</sup>

While attempting to reshape Turkish government, the AKP must also be able to focus on its task of democratization where the government has before shown a bipolar attitude toward the issue. Many of the moves made by the AKP in recent years indicate that the party is more committed to its own self-interest and EU ascension than democracy for its own sake.<sup>32</sup> Problems with the militant Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the southeast have caused the AKP to align with the military in many respects, giving them multiple concessions which allowed the TAF to "maintain its influence while altering its political profile."<sup>33</sup> While the proposed amendments in 2010 favored democracy, the AKP's alignment with the military's hard stance on the Kurdish problem has demonstrated that, in times of struggle, it is willing to put security over democracy.<sup>34</sup> This characteristic will mature as the situation in Syria – which has already spilled over Turkey's southern border in the form of refugees and government shelling – deteriorates further.

In the midst of the Kurdish and Syrian problems, what Turkey needs is a new, more precise definition of its civil-military structure, where constitutional inadequacies have left room for dispute between a secular military and a populist Islamic government. Stipulations such as Article 85 and 35 give the military power to defend the government's Kemalist principles against internal and external threats. The amendments of 2001 reduced the power of the mili-

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a TAF-influenced organization that previously had the power to direct policy, was reduced to a body purely advisory to civilian government.<sup>25</sup> In all, these reforms have curbed the TAF presence in various government entities, such as the Council of Ministers and the National Security Council, while increasing civilian government representation.

On 12 September 2010 the Turkish people voted to pass a referendum for constitutional amendments designed mostly to reduce the role of the TAF in politics.<sup>26</sup> These proposed reforms would curb the power of Turkey's military-influenced judiciary, which has become more politicized by interpreting the law "through time-tested statist and secular lenses."<sup>27</sup> The amendments seek to add more judges by parliamentary election while limiting the judge's terms in office. These reforms are not perfect, and they still have staunch opposition in the secular establishment consisting of the TAF, the high courts, university leaders, and a looming secular

signal of Turkey's continuation to align with European Union standards. The Turkish government has most recently displayed its willingness to respond to illegal military influence, sentencing three former generals and 326 other officers as the result of a trail against a plot to overthrow Erdoğan's AKP government.<sup>29</sup>

With all of these reforms and actions, the European Union has yet to officially grant Turkey the title of a Western state. While their economic credentials are certainly sufficient to join – considering the current state of a number of Eurozone countries – their political criteria and overall "Europeanness" are two categories important to the Union that the nation must continue to work on.<sup>30</sup> The required change may prove to be an entirely new constitution, one without the provisions establishing the military as the guardians of secularism such as in the 1982 Constitution. Erdoğan and his AKP have proposed a blueprint for a more pro-democratic, pro-Islamic nation, but with less than two-thirds of

tary in government, yet they still carry the caveat that they “must not undermine the constitution’s secular tenets, or national security, or public order.”<sup>35</sup> These conditions leave no definite indication of what precisely secular or Kemalist principles are, what defines a threat to national security, or who has the power to decide either way. Such holes in the outline of Turkey’s government have led to a traditional compromise between the civilian and military sectors, the breach of which has led to decades of political strife. With internal pressure from Islamism and Kurdish unrest as well as external pressure from Syria and the European Union, the two sides of government must shed this attitude of weak compromise in order to clearly define Turkey’s civil-military structure and thus define their nation’s true place, whether European or Middle Eastern; or perhaps define a third path someplace in between.

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# Book Review

## *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism, by Robert Pape*

REVIEWED BY VIKTOR THEISS

Robert A. Pape, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, challenges the traditional ideas and stereotypes behind suicide terrorism in his book, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*.<sup>1</sup> Pape argues that suicide terrorism is essentially a calculated act carried out by rational individuals. There are clear discrepancies when one examines the specifics of Pape's analysis or applies Pape's theories to specific cases of terrorism; however, Pape does a more-than-adequate job at revealing overarching patterns and concepts and backing them up with evidence.

Pape states upfront three major cornerstones behind suicide terrorism campaigns: 1) they are nationalistic and secular in nature and all occur in response to foreign occupations.<sup>2</sup> 2) it is necessary for the occupiers' religion to differ from the indigenous population's religion so that the suicide terrorists can easily dehumanize the occupiers, making it acceptable to commit suicide attacks against them.<sup>3</sup> 3) all suicide terror campaigns exist with the goal of coercing democratic occupying nations into ending their occupations.<sup>4</sup>

Pape builds on these cornerstones by first outlining the two

types of coercion: denial and punishment. Punishment involves incurring heavy costs and inflicting damage upon the target. Denial involves convincing the target group that fighting is futile and victory is impossible.<sup>5</sup> Pape argues that since suicide terrorists are always weaker than their targeted group that denial is not an option for them and punishment is the only way to achieve coercion.<sup>6</sup> This leads terrorist organizations to conclude that the best method of coercion by punishment is the use of suicide attacks.

Secondly, Pape's examination of suicide terrorism includes the analysis of social logic. He argues that suicide terrorists need the support of their local community in order for them to succeed.<sup>7</sup> He lists three reasons why: the first is the need of a supportive population base from which to recruit to replenish their ranks.<sup>8</sup> The second requires the community's help and support to avoid detection and attack by their enemy, the military of the foreign occupying power.<sup>9</sup> The last reason is that community support is essential for establishing martyrdom, which is a key element of the individual logic of suicide terrorism.<sup>10</sup> Pape claims that terrorist organizations are able to gain widespread community support

through serving their local communities by organizing charities and providing services.<sup>11</sup>

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The final piece in Pape's analysis is an examination of the individual logic of suicide terrorism. There is one key element to the individual logic of suicide terrorism: altruistic martyrdom. Altruistic suicide is usually a public act, in which the person committing suicide genuinely believes they are acting for the good of the community.<sup>12</sup> Martyrdom is achieved through social acceptance. Martyrs usually gain honor and prestige through committing suicide attacks.<sup>13</sup> Suicide terrorists usually believe in the same goals as their local populaces, and thus the populace legitimizes their means (suicide terrorism) by supporting them.<sup>14</sup> Pape writes, "Communities commonly reserve a prominent place for the names of their martyrs...But adding new names is up to the community. An

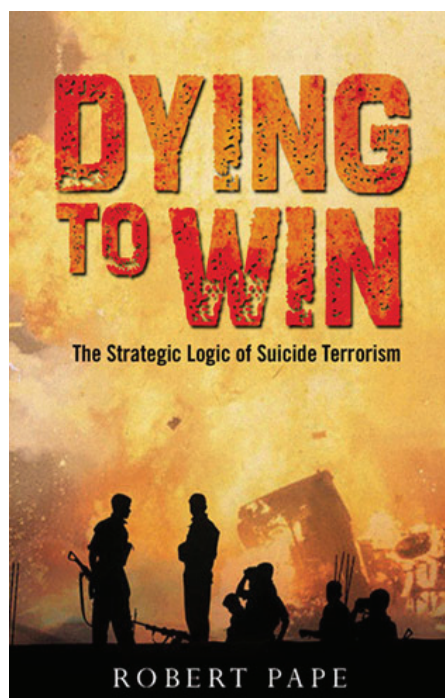
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Cadet VIKTOR THEISS is a Class of 2015 Military and Strategic Studies major.

individual can die. Only a community can make a martyr.”<sup>15</sup> Killing oneself will only make sense to rational individual if there are altruistic motives involved.

Robert Pape backs up his claims with lots of solid evidence. First, due to the sheer amount of research required for writing this book, Pape founded the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (CPOST).<sup>16</sup> The CPOST project is a compilation of data on every single suicide attack between the years 1980 and 2003. This amounts to data on 315 attacks.<sup>17</sup> Pape also gathered data on every single suicide terrorist during the time period 1980-2003, which resulted in information on 462 individual attackers.<sup>18</sup> It is clear that Pape conducted extensive research,<sup>19</sup> as evidenced by three appendices of additional background information. Appendix I lists all of the suicide terrorist campaigns during the period 1980-2003.<sup>20</sup> Appendix II lists all of the occupations that democratic states have carried out during 1980-2003.<sup>21</sup> Appendix III offers an in-depth explanation of the extent of Salafism in Sunni countries.<sup>22</sup> Pape also does a great job of clearly explaining his analytical methods. For example, before discussing the extent of American military presence in the Middle East, Pape first describes his methods for measuring American military presence.<sup>23</sup> Another example is at the beginning of Chapter 8, titled, “Suicide Terrorist Organizations Around the Globe,” where Pape describes the exact method he used to analyze the different suicide terrorist organizations throughout the world.<sup>24</sup> Pape also presents a lot of evidence through data analysis: his

book includes 17 data charts and 26 data tables.<sup>25</sup> Last, Pape presents evidence through in-depth case studies. In his analysis of the social logic of suicide terrorism, Pape closely examined Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, and Al Qaeda.<sup>26</sup> In his analysis of the individual logic of suicide terrorism Pape examined three different attackers. The first is Mohammed Atta, leader of the 9/11 attacks and member of Al Qaeda.<sup>27</sup> The second case study is of an attacker simply named Dhanu, who belonged to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.<sup>28</sup> The third case study describes Saeed Hotari of Hamas.<sup>29</sup> The cases he presents provide the reader with insight into the thinking of a terrorist.



Despite Pape’s seemingly convincing evidence, several critics have been able to point out legitimate concerns and discrepancies in his analysis. Jordan Smith of the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, points out possible problems with Pape’s definition of

suicide terror. Smith points out that Pape included attacks which occurred on military targets, which is contrary to the traditional definition which restricts terrorist attacks to only those which target civilians.<sup>30</sup> Clark McCauley, Professor of psychology at Bryn Mawr College, also points out some concerns.<sup>31</sup> First, McCauley argues that Pape’s refusal to include failed suicide attacks limits his data sample, for the failed attackers would still fit Pape’s definition of a suicide terrorist.<sup>32</sup> Second, McCauley questions the consistency of Pape’s definition of a suicide terrorist campaign, citing a string of five attacks carried out by Hezbollah in Lebanon during 1998-1990.<sup>33</sup> McCauley notes that Pape excluded these attacks even though they fit the definition presented in his own work.<sup>34</sup> McCauley also points out that Pape possibly misattributed some suicide attacks to Al Qaeda. He points out that Pape attributes an attack to Al Qaeda despite the fact no one claimed responsibility for it.<sup>35</sup> He also points out one attack which was claimed by an Al Qaeda subsidiary organization, but Pape assigns it to Al Qaeda.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Captain Michael Gough of the Canadian armed forces points out a contradiction in Pape’s theory. He notes that Pape argues that terrorist organizations engage in suicide attacks because they are largely successful in coercing democratic nations to end occupations.<sup>37</sup> Gough also notes that Pape advocates the US removal of troops from Arabia, meaning that he condones allowing the terrorists to achieve their aims.<sup>38</sup> Gough argues that such an act would encourage terrorists to continue to engage in such practices.<sup>39</sup> So despite Pape’s extensive

research, these analysts have made very legitimate arguments about the discrepancies within his analysis.

With regard to style, Pape's organization of the book is superb. Dividing the book into three main topics and using the chapters as building blocks to support his overall thesis is admirable. One major drawback is that he also becomes very repetitive in these chapters. For example, Pape states his thesis that suicide terrorism is a nationalistic movement in response to foreign occupation which is reiterated four times throughout the book.<sup>40</sup> He really wants to make his point. A final critique concerns Pape's afterword. It seems unnecessary after the concluding chapter and essentially becomes a place for Pape to preach ideas without backing them up with more specific evidence. On this note Gough writes, "His explanations...are disappointingly brief, and his afterword does not include any references."<sup>41</sup> Thus, one could conclude that Pape's book is more valuable for its raw data than the conclusions drawn therefrom.

Still, *Dying to Win* provides excellent background on terrorism for both academics and casual readers alike. Pape provides many charts and tables for academically inclined readers while at the same describing his analytical methods,

thus making it easy for scholars to debate the merits and accuracy of his analysis. Robert Pape has presented revolutionary new ideas in the field of terrorism studies and his book is still worth reading despite the criticisms noted.

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